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ART, POWER, AND PATRONAGE IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF EPIRUS, 1204–1318

Leonela Fundić

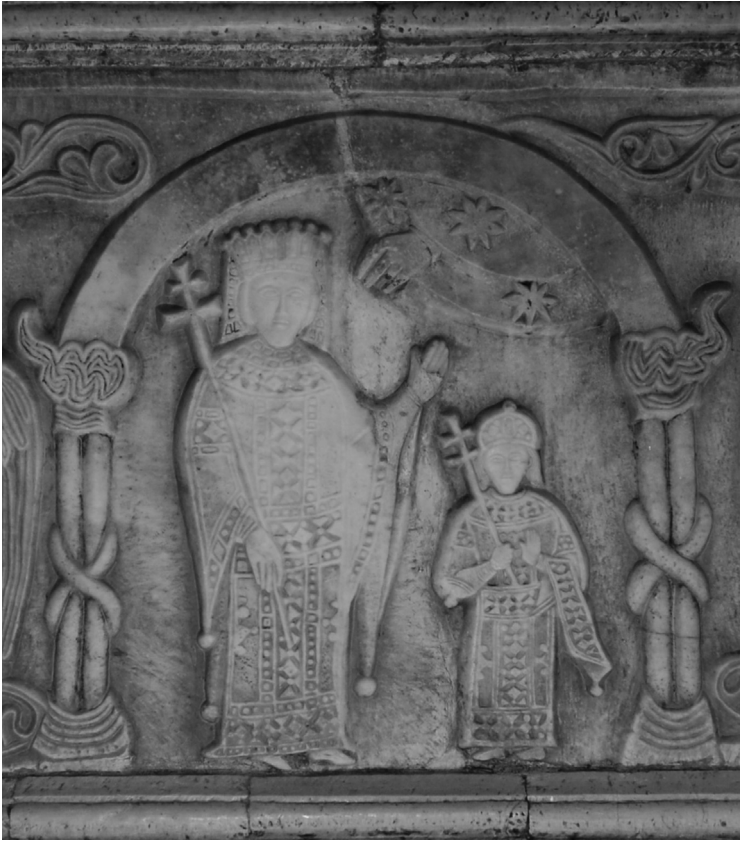
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The Principality of Epirus was a medieval Greek state established in the western part of the Balkans after the fall of Constantinople to the forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The Epirote rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family claimed to be legitimate successors to the Byzantine imperial throne and, with the support of the high clergy and the aristocracy within their domain, carefully maintained their Byzantine identity under the conditions of exile. This book explores a corpus of Epirote architecture, frescoes, sculpture, and inscriptions from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework, focusing on the nexus of art, patronage, and political ideology. Through an examination of a vast array of visual and textual sources, many of them understudied or hitherto unpublished, the book uncovers how the Epirote elite mobilised art and material culture to address the issues of succession and legitimacy, construct memory, reclaim Constantinople, and mediate encounters and exchanges with the Latin West. In doing so, this study offers a new perspective on Byzantine political and cultural history in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade.

Leonela Fundić's research focuses on Late Antique and Byzantine archaeology, art, history, and theology. She holds a doctorate in Byzantine art and history from the University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Since 2013, she has been working as a researcher and lecturer at the School of Theology and Philosophy of the Australian Catholic University. During the academic year 2017–2018, Fundić was a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Ancient History of Macquarie University, working on the Australian Research Council Discovery Project *Memories of Utopia: Destroying the Past to Create the Future*.



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Leonela Fundić
2021 Brisbane

Note to the Reader

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. The names of Greek scholars, when encountered in bibliographical references in Greek, are Latinised, but without the application of macrons. All bibliographical references in Serbian and other Slavic languages are rendered in the Latin alphabet.

‘Cat. No.’ refers to items in the catalogue of churches with internal decoration included in this book. The drawings of iconographic programmes of these churches are also incorporated in the catalogue.

Chapter 2 of the present book incorporates and expands upon parts of my article, “Art and Political Ideology in the State of Epiros during the Reign of Theodore Doukas (r.1215–1230)”, *Byzantina Symmeikta* 23 (2013), pp. 217–250.

Abbreviations

<i>AA</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών</i>
<i>ABME</i>	<i>Αρχεῖον Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων της Ελλάδος</i>
<i>ΑΔ</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον</i>
<i>ABSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς</i>
<i>ΑΠ</i>	<i>Αρχεῖον Πόντου</i>
<i>ArtB</i>	<i>The Art Bulletin</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BIHBR</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut historique Belge de Rome</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BSA</i>	<i>The Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>ΒΣ</i>	<i>Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers Archeologiques</i>
<i>CahBalk</i>	<i>Cahiers Balkaniques</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CorsiRav</i>	<i>Corsi Cultura sull'Arte di Ravenate e Byzantina</i>
<i>DOC</i>	<i>A. R. Bellinger, P. Grierson, Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, 3 vols, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966–1973</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et le Liturgie</i>
<i>ΔΙΕΕ</i>	<i>Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος</i>
<i>ΔΧΑΕ</i>	<i>Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
<i>EchR</i>	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
<i>ΕΕΒΣ</i>	<i>Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών</i>
<i>ΕΕΠΣΑΠΘ</i>	<i>Επιστημονική Επετηρίς Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης</i>
<i>ΕΕΘΣΠΑ</i>	<i>Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Θεολογικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών</i>
<i>ΕΚΠΑ</i>	<i>Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών</i>

xvi *Abbreviations*

ÉO	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
Ηπειρ.Εστ.	<i>Ηπειρωτική Εστία</i>
HX	<i>Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά</i>
ΘΗΕ	<i>Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία</i>
ΙΕΕ	<i>Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους</i>
IRAIK	<i>Izvestija Russkogo Archeologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JÖBG	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinisten Gesellschaft</i>
JBArA	<i>Journal of the British Archeological Association</i>
ΚρητΧρον	<i>Κρητικά Χρονικά</i>
LChrI	<i>Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie</i>
ΛΣ	<i>Λακωνικά Σπουδαί</i>
Mansi	Mansi, J. D. <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima ollection</i> , 53 vols, Paris: H. Welter, 1901–1927 (Reprint: Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1960–1961)
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
ODB	Kazhdan, A. (ed.) <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , 3 vols, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991
ΠΑΕ	<i>Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
PG	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completes. Series graeca</i> , 161 vols. (Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1857–1866)
PLP	E. Trapp (ed.), <i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–1996
RACr	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i>
REB	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
RN	<i>Revue Numismatique</i>
SBS	<i>Studies in Byzantine Sigillography</i> (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection 1987)
TIB	<i>Tabula Imperii Byzantini</i> , Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
VV	<i>Vizantijskij Vremennik</i>
ZLU	<i>Zbornik za Likovne Umetnosti Matice Srpske</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta</i>

Introduction

In the wake of the Fourth Crusade and the capture of Constantinople in 1204, the artistic landscape of the Byzantine world radically changed, not much less than the political one. The prominence acquired by new centres of power, such as Nicaea and Trebizond; the unprecedented influx of Western objects, artists, and tastes; the ambitious patronage of the elites of the emerging Slavic nations, Serbia and Bulgaria, in the Balkans; and the formation of a diaspora of Constantinopolitan painters and master-builders all contributed to the creation of a fundamentally different artistic environment.

The richness and complexity of the Byzantine art of this period, including its patronage, have attracted considerable scholarly attention. However, the art and patronage of the Principality of Epirus, one of the Greek successor states that emerged from the wreckage of 1204 has not generated the academic interest it deserves. The architecture and fresco decoration of selected Epirote monuments are the subject of several important monographs in Greek. However, these books are rather traditional in their methodology. They are mostly preoccupied with questions of style, iconography, and workshop practices, paying little attention to the larger issues of patronage, political ideology, memory, and cross-cultural exchange. This book sets out to address this lacuna by offering the first comprehensive account of art and patronage in the Principality of Epirus examined in the context of political and ideological changes during the reign of the Komnenos Doukas family in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (1204–1318).

History of the Principality of Epirus

After the conquest of Constantinople on April 13, 1204, by the Latin troops of the Fourth Crusade, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was established. It included Constantinople, the northwest part of Asia Minor, Thrace, and several islands in the Aegean Sea.¹ The new emperor was Baldwin of Flanders (1204–1205). The rest of the Byzantine territories were apportioned by the Treaty of *Partitio Romaniae* to the leaders of the crusade and the Venetians.² However, two Byzantine ‘rump states’, Nicaea ruled by the Laskaris family³ and Trebizond by the Komnenos family,⁴ were a threat to the new Latin Empire. This empire was also challenged from the West, where another Byzantine statelet, Epirus, was formed.

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According to the Latin Treaty of *Partitio Romaniae*, western Greece, including Epirus and the Ionian Islands, should have been governed by the Venetians. Many different reasons contributed to making this an extremely difficult task for the Serenissima. Furthermore, the Venetians were certainly not as interested in the hinterland, and especially not in the Epirus' inaccessible mountains, as they were in the major ports, like Dyrrachion (Durrës), and the Ionian Islands and Corfu. As a result, the Byzantine state of Epirus was established in the territory between Durrës in Albania and Arta, including western Greece as far south as Nafpaktos (Fig. 1).

The information about the first three decades of the history of Epirus as an independent state of the temporarily dissolved Byzantine Empire is unfortunately scarce, as no historian whose work survives lived in the area. The most important



Fig. 1 Map of Epirus

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

historical information about Epirus comes from writers of the Empire of Nicaea, but they are often incomplete and biased.⁵ Also important, although sporadic, is the information provided by the official documents of the first two rulers, Michael I and Theodore; the court acts; and the surviving collections of letters from distinguished writers and church leaders of that time.⁶ For example, the correspondence of the metropolitan of Nafpaktos, John Apokaukos, sheds light on the historical events of the time of Michael I (1204–1215) and his successor, Theodore Angelos Doukas (1215–1230).⁷ Furthermore, various writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid, inform us about the internal situation in Epirus, as well as about the relations between this state and Nicaea.⁸ Finally, the correspondence of George Bardanes, archbishop of Corfu, is an important source for the history of that island. Scholars have also used *The Life of Saint Theodora*, written by the monk Job Melias Iasites, as a historical source, but it is quite unreliable, and much information concerning the political and social history is erroneous.⁹

Michael I Komnenos Doukas (r. 1204–1215) was the first Epirote ruler.¹⁰ Michael, and his two brothers, Theodore and Manuel Doukas, were the sons of sebastokrator John, the son of Constantine Angelos and Theodora Komnene, the daughter of Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaine. Sebastokrator John was the uncle of the emperors Isaac II and Alexios III Angelos. As can be observed, although Michael was related to the Angelos dynasty in Constantinople, he used the family names of Komnenos and Doukas, which he had inherited from his maternal grandmother.¹¹

Michael I Komnenos was first mentioned when Emperor Isaac II (1185–1195), who was his cousin, handed him over as a hostage to Frederic Barbarossa. Towards the end of Isaac's reign, Michael performed the function of duke and anagrapheus¹² of the double theme of Mylasa/Milas and Melanoudion (April 1195).¹³ After Isaac's death, Michael held these positions during the time of Alexios III (1195–1203). However, Michael revolted against Alexios but was defeated, so he sought refuge in the Iconian Sultanate.¹⁴ According to Villehardouin's *Chronicle*, in 1204, Michael entered the service of Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat, in Constantinople, and went to Thessaloniki with him in the summer of the same year.¹⁵ Michael, however, soon revolted against Boniface and approached the governor of Arta, probably Senacherim, whom Emperor Alexios III appointed governor of Nicopolis and Aetolia in 1204 and who had already organised resistance against the Latins. After Senacherim was murdered, Michael married his daughter, inherited the territories ruled by her father, and became the independent ruler of the area between Arta and Durrës,¹⁶ the main port of the Epirus state.¹⁷

Michael I Doukas (r. 1204–1215) as the first Epirote ruler and a pious defender of the Byzantine Empire and Orthodoxy, did not immediately engage in warfare against the crusaders, but rather forged alliances with them, as the state of Epirus was surrounded by crusading states. Some Ionian islands were ruled by Mayo Orsini. Durrës and Corfu were occupied by the Venetians. Thessaly was divided between the crusading barons who recognised first Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat (1205), and later Henry of Flanders (1209),¹⁸ while William of Champlitte

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and Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, with the support of Boniface of Montferrat, established the principality of Achaia in the Peloponnese.¹⁹

When John X Kamateros, patriarch of Constantinople (1198–1206), refused to recognise Michael as a legitimate successor to the Byzantine throne, he turned to Pope Innocent III (1160/1161–1216) for recognition. In addition, he also became a subject of the Latin Empire by giving his daughter as wife to Henry of Flanders's brother Eustace in 1209 and offering one-third of his territory as a dowry. Therefore, the state of Epirus, which had already received a *de facto* recognition from the pope, gained *de jure* recognition from the Latin emperor of Constantinople. One of the reasons he did this was the death of Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat king of Thessaloniki to whom Michael became a vassal as early as 1204. As the Kingdom of Thessaloniki became too weak to help anyone, Michael tried to gain an ally in Henry of Flanders.²⁰

Michael I Doukas was also a 'vassal' of the Venetians with an obligation to fight against their enemies and pay a certain amount of money as an annual fee. Every year, he also offered one gilded altar cloth for the church of San Marco and one to the doge. From this treaty of vassalage that Michael signed with Venice in 1210, we can see that he was the ruler of the following territories: the duchy of Nikopolis, Ioannina, Vagenitia, Dryinopolis, Glavinitzia, and Grandis(?), the latter of which cannot be identified with any of the known toponyms.²¹

Michael's alliances with the Latins did not last long. From 1210, all agreements that he had forged with the pope, Emperor Henry of Flanders, and the Venetians were nothing more than diplomatic overtures preceding a declaration of war on all of them. In the encyclical of Henry of Flanders from 13 January 1212, Michael Doukas is called 'the most terrible traitor' (*traditor potentissimus*).²² Michael began to conquer new territories and expand the borders of Epirus. He achieved the most significant successes in the north, where in 1213 and 1214, he captured first Durrës and then Corfu. At the end of 1214, Michael managed to conquer the Serbian Shkodër, as well as most of Thessaly.²³

We draw data on the borders of the Epirote state and their expansion during the reign of Michael Doukas from several sources. According to Niketas Choniates, Michael Doukas conquered Aetolia, Nicopolis, and Durrës²⁴ and, according to the Akropolites, Arta, Nafpaktos, and Ioannina.²⁵ Overall, at the time of Michael I's death, the newly established state extended from Durrës to Nafpaktos, including the islands of Corfu and Lefkada, as well as Larissa and some other parts of Thessaly.²⁶

After Michael's death, Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230) continued the same policy, which resulted in a very successful expansion in Macedonia and Thessaly.²⁷ The state of Epirus reached its peak through the conquest of Thessaloniki in 1224, threatening the very existence of the Latin Empire (Fig. 2). Theodore took Thessaloniki from the Latins in 1224 and was crowned the emperor of Thessaloniki, thus briefly setting himself up as a rival to the emperor of Nicaea. The capture of Theodore by the Bulgarians quickly diminished the aspirations of Theodore to the imperial throne of Constantinople. In April 1230, the Bulgarian king, John Asen, defeated Theodore's army at Klokotnitsa and took Theodore



Fig. 2 Map of Epirus and surrounding states around the year 1225

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

and his officers as prisoners. Theodore was blinded and kept in a Bulgarian prison for seven years. In the next few months, John Asen conquered Xanthi, Serres, Pelagonia, Ohrid, Prilep, and Devol.²⁸

After the battle at Klokotnitsa, there were a few other attempts from other members of the Komnenos Doukas family, including Theodore Doukas after his return from Bulgarian slavery around 1237, to keep the Kingdom of Thessaloniki. The kingdom was, however, already very weakened, and it could not have survived independently or as part of Epirus. Theodore's son John was forced by John III Vatatzes (1222–1254) to substitute the title of emperor for that of a despot. In 1246, Thessaloniki was annexed by Nicaea. All these events did not end the existence of Epirus or reduce the ambitions of the Komnenos Doukas family. Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1230–1266/1268), after 1252, recovered many territories in western Macedonia with the major victory in Prilep, an important city and castle that controlled the entire Pelagonia. Keeping imperial pretensions alive as the last serious rival to Nicaea, he failed to capture more territories and was forced to sign a peace treaty with the Nicaean emperor John Vatatzes, sealed with the marriage between his granddaughter Maria to Michael's son Nikephoros. Despite the fact that both the father and the son were honoured with the title of

despot, Michael forged alliances with western leaders, Manfred of Hohenstaufen and William II Villehardouin through his daughters marriages. He wanted to protect Epirus' independence against threats that could come from the West, and, at the same time, he did not like his subjugation to Nicaea.²⁹

After the Battle of Pelagonia (1259), many territories of Epirus were temporarily conquered by Nicaea. Michael II Komnenos Doukas and his wife Theodora were in exile in Cephalonia on the court of Michael's uncle, Mario Orsini.³⁰ This catastrophic defeat of the Epirotes lasted for a very short period. Already in 1260, Michael with help from his son, John Doukas, regained most of the lost territories in Epirus, returned to Arta, and continued his war against Nicaea. Even in 1261, when Michael Palaiologos marched into Constantinople and became a new Byzantine emperor, Epirotes did not abandon their ambition. After several unsuccessful attempts against Nicaea, Michael II Komnenos Doukas was forced to negotiate with Michael Palaiologos. Michael II agreed to marry his son, the despot Nikephoros,³¹ with Anna Kantakouzene, a niece of Michael VIII Palaiologos, and to cede the town of Ioannina to Nicaea. After Michael II's death, his territories were split between his sons: Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas succeeded his father in Epirus, and John I Doukas stayed in Thessaly.

Due to Nikephoros's marriage with Anna from the Palaiologan court and thanks to his title 'despot', which he received from her family, the rivalry between Epirus and Nicaea was temporarily paused. As Nikephoros did not like to serve the interests of his wife Anna's family, he forged an alliance with the western rulers. He gave his daughter Thamar to Charles II's son, Philip I of Taranto, with the right to inherit the state of Epirus after his death. During this time, Nikephoros did not consider this arrangement's future consequences for Epirus. When he died, his widow Anna rejected all agreements and became the regent of her juvenile son, Thomas I Komnenos Doukas, managing to resist all Latin attacks. Epirus continued to be ruled by Thomas I until 1318 when he was murdered by Count Nicholas Orsini who then overtook Epirus. With Thomas's death, the rule of the Komnenos Doukas family in Epirus ceased for good.

These historical events, summarised briefly here, will be independently analysed in the following book chapters, where detailed references will also be provided.

Question of Terminology: Despotate or Principality of Epirus?

The medieval independent region of Epirus has long been called the 'Despotate of Epirus', although it has been shown that, strictly speaking, the use of the word 'despotate' is not correct.³² In fact, the term is of western origin and was attributed to a small independent territory where there was no central authority. For this reason, the term is found in the sources closely related to the West, such as *Chronicle of Morea*. When referring to medieval Epirus, Byzantine sources use terminology related to its geographical location: τὰ κατὰ τὴν Δύσιν κάστρα καὶ χῶραι ('western castles and lands') or δυτικὰ θέματα ('western themes').³³ In the inscription

from the tomb in Vlacherna of Arta, Nikephoros is mentioned as *δυσμοκράτωρ*, which could be interpreted as ‘ruler of the west’. In another inscription, preserved in the church of Panagia Vellas in Voulgareli, Nikephoros and his wife Anna are mentioned as *σκηπτροκρατοῦντες τῶν δυτικῶν φρουρίων* (rulers of the western fortresses).³⁴ Pachymeres mentioned Michael II and Nikephoros as the despots in the west, and Nikephoros’s wife Anna as ‘the basilissa in the west’.³⁵

From the fourth century onwards, the emperor was called a despot in official documents. Later, this adjective also appears on coins, as well as on the inscriptions of various buildings. The title of the despot, which was formed during the twelfth century, in its new sense was used for the highest title after the imperial and was given to members of the royal family, including the grooms. In some cases, the word ‘despot’ also referred to rulers of certain neighbouring countries; moreover, this title is also used as a prefix for the supreme ecclesiastical hierarchy—that is, patriarchs and bishops.³⁶

The term ‘despotaton’ (*δεσποτῆτον*) in the Greek language did not mean the territory ruled by the despot but only the dignity of the despot. It has been proven that Epirus’ founder, Michael I Angelos Komnenos Doukas, was simply a local ruler who did not have the title of despot. Michael’s signatures on official documents and letters also confirm that he never used the title of despot. He usually signed himself as *Κομνηνὸς κυρ Μιχαήλ*.³⁷ The only title that Michael probably possessed was the ‘dux’, which he had received from the doge of Venice when he signed the vassal treaty in 1210. According to this document, the ruling territories by Michael were named the ‘ducat’ (*ducatus*), so he probably was a ‘dux’ and at that time was also the Venetian governor of Durrës, Marino Valareso.³⁸

Michael’s brother and successor, Theodore, did not have any title until he occupied Thessaloniki and became an emperor. In his official signatures, he used his name Theodore Komnenos, adding also the family name Doukas, which he inherited from his maternal grandmother as mentioned previously. Later, his successors also imitated him and were often mentioned in the sources as Komnenoi and Doukas but never as Angels. Therefore, the first two rulers of Epirus did not hold the title of despot since the right to grant it belonged to the Byzantine or Latin emperor. As we have seen, Epirotes did not have good relations with either Theodore Laskaris or later with the Latins. Michael I Doukas and his successor Theodore stressed their blood ties to the Komnenian family and, accordingly, claimed that they were legal successors of the imperial throne. They were not expecting to receive any titles from the emperor, but they attempted to maintain the Byzantine identity with the ultimate goal of recapturing the imperial capital, Constantinople, and restoring the former Byzantine Empire.

The title of despot was bestowed upon Michael II and his son Nikephoros when the latter married the emperor’s daughter Maria in 1256. This act was calculated to define their state of subservience to the emperor’s authority. The term ‘despotate’, however, has been used for Epirus only starting with the sources from the late fourteenth century. For all the aforementioned reasons, in this book, the use of the term ‘despotate’ for the newly established Byzantine statelet will be avoided.

The Scholarship on Byzantine Epirus: Texts, History, and Art

Epirus has attracted scholarly attention since the middle of the nineteenth century. P. Aravantinos was the first to write a history of Epirus in 1856,³⁹ followed 30 years later, in 1895, by another history written by I. Romanos.⁴⁰ However, the more significant contribution for understanding the western part of the Byzantine world started with the publication of various collections of writings consisting of letters and documents of church prelates from Epirus. V.G. Vasiljevsky, A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, S. Pétridès, and N.A. Bees were responsible for publishing the correspondence of John Apokaukos with various eminent contemporary personalities, including Demetrios Chomatenos, George Bardanes, the metropolitan of Athens Michael Choniates, Theodore Doukas and his wife Maria, and other high-ranking officials from the court and the clergy. The writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, which include documents, synodal acts, judicial decisions, and letters, also have an enormous importance. Although the first of them were published by Cardinal Pitra in 1891,⁴¹ over the last decades, Prinzing has made the greatest contribution to the study of Demetrios Chomatenos. From the end of the nineteenth century, A. Moustoxidis was the first to recognise the importance of George Bardanes, metropolitan of Corfu, and he edited some of his letters.⁴²

However, all these first publications of the primary sources were not incorporated in any of the studies of the history of Epirus. Since the first monograph from the nineteenth century, there have been some sporadic studies on the history of Epirus by English historians, until Donald M. Nicol wrote his first monograph in 1957, providing the first analytic history of Epirus between 1204 and 1261. In addition to a number of shorter key studies on the same topic, in 1984, Nicol published his second monograph on the history of Epirus, covering the period between 1267 and 1479. Subsequently, much has been written on the topic by prominent scholars such as A.S. Zafraka, G. Prinzing, V. Katsaros, and D. Dželebdžić about the origin and development of the state of Epirus, including its ideological, political, and social history.

The art and material culture in Epirus and Aitolokarnania also began to be studied in the late nineteenth century by the Greek Archaeological Service. Spyros Lambros visited the Vlacherna monastery and the church of Panagia Vellas in 1886 and later published the first photos, architectural plans, and first observations.⁴³ G. Lambakis also conducted some research on Epirote monuments in 1889.⁴⁴ The first systematic study of the Byzantine monuments in medieval Epirus was started by A. Orlandos, who at the same time restored many of the monuments. His work was continued by P. Vokotopoulos, who, performing the duties of a curator in the area, had published almost all the churches in the Greek *Archaeological Bulletin*. Particularly valuable are his studies in which he deals in detail with the art of Epirus and the artistic production during the thirteenth century. Vokotopoulos's monograph *The Monastery of Saint Demetrios at Phanari*, published in 2012, has substantially contributed to the study of Epirote architecture.⁴⁵

Equally important are the studies of other scholars published in the last two decades. Among them, a special place occupies various studies by M.

Acheimastou-Potamianou and especially her monograph on the Vlacherna monastery published in 2009.⁴⁶ V. Papadopoulou has been very energetically working on the preservation of a large number of monuments and carried out extensive research on sites in Epirus, followed by numerous publications. The most important among them are her three books: *Byzantine Arta*, *Icons in Arta*, and *Blacherna Monastery*.⁴⁷ The relatively recent research by G. Velenis dedicated to epigraphy and architecture of the Blacherna monastery in Arta has enriched fundamentally our knowledge not only about this church but also the Epirote art in general.⁴⁸ The book *Byzantine Painting in Arta* written by D. Giannoulis is also a valuable source, as he was the first to publish some unknown parts of the frescoes from this city.⁴⁹

Art, Power, and Patronage in the Principality of Epirus, 1204–1318

This book explores a corpus of Epirote architecture, frescoes, sculpture, and inscriptions dated from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework, focusing on the nexus of art, patronage, and political ideology. The geographical area selected for investigation includes the territories stretching from Durrës in Albania to Arta in western Greece and to the south as far as Nafaktos in Aitolokarnania (Fig. 1). One of the book's main themes is the visual articulation of ideological responses to the Latin occupation of Constantinople and the experience of exile in Epirus. The Epirote rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family portrayed themselves as the legitimate heirs of the Byzantine imperial throne and, with the support of the high clergy and the aristocracy within their domain, carefully maintained their Byzantine identity under the conditions of exile.

Through a diverse set of evidence, ranging from inscriptions, church dedications, and monumental pictorial programmes, to icons, coins, and seals, this book offers an in-depth analysis of the political *spiritus movens* behind the artistic patronage of the Komnenos Doukas family and the high clergy of Epirus and Epirote aristocracy. In addition to these, an array of textual sources that shed further light on the artistic culture are included here, as well. For example, the aforementioned letters of eminent Epirote clergymen John Apokaukos and George Bardanes; a series of legal acts issued by Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid; the histories of George Akropolites and George Pachymeres; a Greek chronicle known as *Χρονικὸν τοῦ Γαλαξειδίου*, *The Chronicle of Morea*; and the hagiographic texts composed in honour of St Theodora, the wife of Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1230–1266/1268), Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja, and others.

In Chapter 1, I argue that, along with the universal motives of piety, contrition, thankfulness, and salvation, which preoccupied royal patrons across the Byzantine world, the patronage of the Epirote rulers was to a large extent informed by a nostalgia for the lost 'Queen of Cities', i.e., Constantinople. Chapter 2 investigates how the Epirote rulers consciously sought to model their capital Arta after the image of Constantinople. In this way, they preserved the memory of the imperial

capital, while the carefully maintained link with Constantinople served as an ideological basis in their attempts to restore the former empire. Epirote church prelates praised the rulers in their writings and public oratory. For instance, they associated the second Epirote ruler Theodore with the prophet David, frequently invoking select biblical verses to draw parallels between Constantinople and Sion. Such eulogies encapsulated a political vision, according to which Theodore was expected to lead the chosen people to Jerusalem, i.e., Constantinople, which the new Babylonians—that is, the crusaders—had destroyed. Similar ideas were reflected and propagated in contemporary church programmes and epigraphy, all of which are analysed in this chapter. All the aforementioned examples particularly held currency during the time when the state of Epirus reached its peak after Theodore's conquest of Thessaloniki in 1224. By crowning himself as the emperor of Thessaloniki, Theodore briefly challenged the emperor of Nicaea.

Chapter 3 addresses the impact that new political changes and alliances after the demise of the Empire of Thessaloniki in 1230, including the ambitions of the new Epirote ruler Michael II Komnenos Doukas to rival the emperor of Nicaea, had on Epirote art.

Chapter 4 explores history and art during the period between 1267–1296/1298. The idea of recapturing Constantinople was not at the top of Nikephoros' agenda, the Epirote ruler who succeeded Michael II Komnenos Doukas. Nikephoros was mostly concerned with the maintenance of Epirus' territory and its independence, and hence his relations with the restored Byzantine court in Constantinople were amiable. On the other hand, Nikephoros reinforced an alliance with the Latins—namely, with Charles of Anjou. The Epirote interactions with Italy, which also encompassed a frequent movement of merchants, pilgrims, and goods, including art objects, especially icons and manuscripts, had some impact on Epirote art. This western influence is especially evident during the last decade of the thirteenth century, as witnessed by the key monuments sponsored by despot Nikephoros. It is quite probable that the despot attempted to visually express the union of the two cultures and his commitment to his Latin allies through the works of art he commissioned.

The last chapter is focused on the question of legitimacy of the last Komnenos Doukas rulers through the lens of artistic production. After the death of Nikephoros in 1296, his widow Anna sought to reinforce the legitimacy of her regime through artistic means, as witnessed by pictorial and sculptural decorations produced at her behest. The chapter further analyses the aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage which further attempted to consolidate Anna's regime and legitimise Thomas' succession to the Epirote throne.

A large part of this book is dedicated to the analyses and interpretations of the church buildings and the corpus of Byzantine monumental paintings in Epirus. I include iconographic and stylistic analyses only when absolutely necessary to better understand the Epirote art.

Accompanying the main text of the book is a detailed catalogue of Epirote monuments and their iconographic programmes mentioned in the text. The catalogue includes architectural plans and perspectival views showing the interior

arrangement of iconographic units within each church. The catalogue provides not only the first systematic presentation of a number of previously under-published monuments but also revises the dating of several published ensembles.

Many of the preserved dedicatory inscriptions, either found in situ or housed in museum collections and relevant written sources: letters, acts, documents, and similar are here translated into English for the first time.

Notes

- 1 Akropolites, 13.6–11.
- 2 Carile, 1965, 125–305; Laiou, 2005.
- 3 Angold, 1975; Langdon, 1992; Angelov, 2007, 293–310; Stavridou-Zafraka, 2014, 254–256.
- 4 The Latin occupation did not cause the establishment of the Empire of Trebizond; rather, it was founded by the Komnenian family, which was overthrown by the Angeloi in 1185. See Miller, 1926; Savvidis, 1984; Eastmond, 2004, XIX–XX and references therein; Stavridou-Zafraka, 2014, 256–257.
- 5 *Akropolites* (Macrides), 94–97.
- 6 Katsaros, 1992; Konstantinidis, 2001.
- 7 Dželebdžić, 2008; Apokaukos (Bees).
- 8 *Ponemata Diaphora*.
- 9 *Life of St. Theodora* (Talbot), 1996.
- 10 Varzos, 1984; Polemis, 1968, 91–92; Nicol, 1957, 24–46.
- 11 Stiernon, 1959, 102–120; Loenertz, 1973, 362–364.
- 12 Ἀναγραφεύς was a fiscal official whose function was the revision of the cadastre. See *ODB*, s.v. ‘Anagrapheus’.
- 13 Miklosich and Müller, 1887, 320–328.
- 14 Choniates, *Historia*, 529.18–26; Polemis, 1968, 91–92.
- 15 Ferjančić, 1964, 111.
- 16 Durrës was not included before 1214. See p. 4.
- 17 *Life of St. Theodora* (Talbot), 1996.
- 18 Magdalino, 1989, 97.
- 19 Bon, 1969; Lock, 2013; Gerstel, 2013a, 2013b.
- 20 Nicol, 1957, 34.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 22 Prinzing, 1973, 411, l. 15, 422–423.
- 23 Magdalino, 1989, 97.
- 24 Choniates, *Historia*, 638–644.
- 25 Akropolites, 14.4.
- 26 Nicol, 1957, 42.
- 27 For Theodore, see Nicol, 1957, 47–75, 103–112.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 111.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 169–180.
- 30 Akropolites, 171–172.
- 31 His first wife Maria died in 1258.
- 32 On the anachronistic name of the state of Epirus as Despotate, see Stavridou-Zafraka, 2001.
- 33 Nicol, 1984, 220–221.
- 34 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 55.
- 35 Nicol, 1984, 220.
- 36 On the title of despot, see *ODB*, s.v. ‘Despot’; Ferjančić, 1960, 3–26, 1973, 45–53; Failler, 1982, 171–186.

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- 37 Stiernon, 1959, 102 sq., esp. 103, nos. 12, 13, 14, 20, 107, nos. 55, 57; Ferjančić, 1960, 49–53.
- 38 Tafel and Thomas, 1856, Nos. 223 and 224, pp. 119–123.
- 39 Aravantinos, 1856.
- 40 Romanos, 1895.
- 41 Pitra, 1891.
- 42 Moustoxidis, 1848.
- 43 Lambros, 1905.
- 44 Lambakis, 1903, 92, Figs. 25 and 26.
- 45 Vokotopoulos, 2012.
- 46 See bibliography.
- 47 For works of V. Papadopoulou, see bibliography.
- 48 Velenis, 2015.
- 49 Giannoulis, 2010.

1 Artistic Production and Patronage in Epirus During the Thirteenth and the Beginning of the Fourteenth Centuries

1.1. Art Production in Epirus at the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century

Cultural and economic conditions in the newly established state were favourable for the unhindered development of art.¹ The available literary sources, art objects, inscriptions in metrical epigrams preserved on edifices, and the decoration of churches with elaborate theological iconographic programmes all testify to the high education and aesthetic standards of the people who commissioned them. This is not surprising, as Arta, the capital city of Epirus, was a centre that gathered intellectuals and many high-ranking officials of Byzantium. After 1204, many refugees, including monks and nuns, arrived from Constantinople and other parts of the Byzantine Empire that were under the threat of Latins.²

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, there were textiles, silk, and embroidery workshops in Nafpaktos (old Lepanto)³ and Arta.⁴ According to the treaty concluded between the republic of Venice and Michael I Komnenos Doukas on 20 June 1210, Michael was obliged to send annually 'one venerable piece of cloth woven from gold to decorate the altar of San Marco'.⁵ During the Great Lent in 1219, John Apokaukos sent two fabrics coloured red and yellow to Theodore Doukas.⁶ In addition, there is a piece of evidence from August 1228 regarding an artistic embroidering workshop at the court of Constantine Doukas.⁷ Unfortunately, no piece of art that could be attributed to these workshops has been preserved.

The medieval state of Epirus was established on the territory of the former theme of Nikopolis, which was a prosperous place where the arts were free to develop. Fortifications, harbour facilities, monasteries, churches, and water supply facilities, as well as many other industrial and secular buildings were already in existence there.⁸ Nikopolis was already famous for its many early Byzantine basilicas, with important sculpture and mosaic decorations.⁹ Many churches and monasteries were built on the sites of those earlier basilicas during the middle Byzantine period.¹⁰ According to Veikou, there were 120 churches and monasteries in Nikopolis.¹¹ In the thirteenth century, a significant number of these middle Byzantine churches were renovated and decorated. For example, in Arta: Ag. Theodora and Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, Plissioi: Ag. Demetrios Katsouris,

Vlacherna monastery, in Rivio: Ag. Stefanos, in Varassova: Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos, and others. In addition, the activity related to the renovation of old and the construction of new churches led to the formation of a distinct 'local Epirote architectural school'.¹²

1.2. Artistic Patronage in Epirus

The term 'patron' is denoted in two different ways. According to the first, patron is someone who came up with the idea of a work, paid for its creation, or essentially influenced its design. At the time, patronage was considered an important activity. It has commonly been regarded as a crucial feature in the creation of art during the Middle Ages. During the entire history of the Byzantine Empire, patrons significantly contributed to art, architecture, literature, and communal wellbeing.¹³

Another understanding of patronage is a form of personal or collective devotion to saints as heavenly patrons who were also 'protectors' (προστάτης). Patrons who sponsored artworks or churches also had their own celestial patrons (protectors), who could be angels, saints, Jesus Christ, or the Virgin Mary. Devotion to a certain saint was often passed down family lines as, for example to St Demetrios or to Archangel Michael, who was portrayed on icons or objects of art and had churches dedicated to them. For example, Archangel Michael and St Demetrios were the celestial patrons of the imperial house of the Palaiologoi.¹⁴

For decades Byzantine scholars have been attempting to recognise the patrons of many churches and various works of art and to assess the role of patronage in Byzantine art.¹⁵ Although the names of donors were included in some donor inscriptions, in the vast majority of cases, the question of patrons' connection with certain objects of art or monument/church remains open. There were many motives behind the patronage: the desire for saintly intercession, thanksgiving for victories in battles or for a cure, penance for sins, etc.

The patron's involvement in artistic sponsorship in Byzantium is difficult to understand. The sources are silent about the relationship between patrons and artists and their mutual participation in the building, decoration, or writing process. Was it common for the patron to assign specific themes for an iconographic programme or to instruct the church painters? Was the patron involved in the choice of the text in the dedicatory inscription? Did patrons visit their foundations during the construction and decoration process? In general, it is almost impossible to ascertain a patron's engagement in the process of patronage; it seems certain, however, that patrons were not always the source of ideas. The themes reflected in works of art could have been imposed by political, monastic, or other social authority or reflect the current historical and cultural milieu. According to Anthony Cutler, personal choice should be considered as a less decisive factor in Byzantine art than cultural and social customs and that, consequently, one should avoid using the term 'patron', in the sense of the primary designer and instigator of a work of art as obsolete.¹⁶

The acts of patronage in Epirus—namely, the renovation of older shrines and the foundation of new ones, including their decoration—followed the traditional

Byzantine patronage arrangements.¹⁷ In addition to the donors' desire to ensure their eternal salvation and to display their power or social standing, Epirotes also wanted to maintain the Byzantine identity of the newly established state and preserve the memory of the lost 'Queen of Cities', Constantinople. Using their patronage activities, they wished to assert themselves as legitimate heirs to the Byzantine Empire following its fragmentation in 1204. Epirote monuments during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries range from princely foundations sponsored by members of the ruling Komnenos Doukas family, local aristocracy, and bishops, to unassuming cave churches and village shrines built by clergymen, monks, and local communities.

1.3. Artistic Patronage of the Epirote Ruling Komnenos Doukas Family

The artistic production in Epirus under its first two rulers, Michael I (r. 1204–1215) and Theodore (r. 1215–1230), is still poorly understood. The circumstances of the foundation or renovation of churches, however, are to an extent clarified by literary sources and inscriptions dating from this period. For example, Metropolitan John Apokaukos (1200–1230) informs us that Michael I and Theodore Komnenos Doukas founded an unidentified monastery at Chimara.¹⁸ A monk named Nikon, who was a legate of the patriarchal monasteries in Bagenetia (Βαγενέτια),¹⁹ lived in that same monastery in 1215.²⁰ Sadly, archaeological data about this church are absent.

The extant epigraphic record also demonstrates the construction activity of the Komnenos Doukas family during the first three decades of the thirteenth century and its involvement in the decoration of several prominent Epirote churches and castles.²¹ A three-aisled, timber-roofed basilica with a single apse known as Episkopi at Mastron, in Aitolioakarnania, is one such example (Fig. XIV-1).²² During the existence of the state of Epirus, Episkopi at Mastron was the seat of the bishops of Achelos.²³ A fragmentarily preserved inscription in the conch of this church's sanctuary apse mentions Theodore Doukas and his brother Constantine:²⁴

+ Τὸ[.....ἄδε]λφούς
 [.....στεφ]ηφόρους
 [.....]ηφορ[.....] ε[.....]ν πρὸς θρό-
 νον βασιλείας ...δεσπο[ίνης Ἀν]νας φι[λευσεβε]στάτης με-
 5 γάλῃς Κομνηνῆς [.....]δεσπ[ό]τη Θεοδ[ώ]ρ[ω] καὶ Κ[ων]σταντίνῳ
 ἐ[κ μητρό]τῆτος πάντας [γέ]νει βασιλέω[ν]
 Κομνηνὸν Ἀλέ[ξιον] τὸν δούλον σὸν πάντως· εὐειδέσται[ος] γὰρ
 <β[ασι]λείας [ἐσ]χά[της]

The [. . .] brothers [. . .] wearing crowns [. . .] towards the throne of the kingdom [. . .] of the mistress Anna the most reverent, the great Komnena [. . .] the despot Theodore and Constantine from motherhood all with royal descent Komnenos Alexios your servant in all ways; for the most beautiful of <the ultimate kingdom> (?)

Next to the inscription is the representation of a kneeling cleric who prays to the Virgin Mary (Fig. XIV-2). The fresco should probably be dated to the same period as the inscription, namely to the second decade of the thirteenth century.²⁵ Unfortunately, the identity of the praying figure cannot be established due to the absence of a name and the overall damage to the painting.

The name of Theodore Doukas's brother, despot Constantine, turns up in an inscription on the fragments of a sarcophagus from the middle Byzantine monastery of Varnakova.

-
- Ἦγαγεν ἡμᾶς ὧδε θανάτου νόμος
]
 Σεβαστοκράτωρ Ἀννα καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος
]
 5 Καὶ λοῖσθον δ' αὐτὸν δεσπότην Κωνσταντῖνο[v
]
 [Π]ρὸ τῆς δίκης ρύσαι με τῆς καταδίκης
 [.....]

The [natural] law of death brought us here, [. . .] sebastokrator, Anna and Constantine [. . .] and the last despot Constantine [. . .]. Before the trial save me from the condemnation [. . .].

Second fragment:

-
- [Τὸ πλήρωμα ἧ]νωσεν ἡμᾶς τοῦ χρόνου
 Κομνηνοδοῦκ[ας
συμ]περικλείει τάφοις·
 Ἀλέξιον μὲν.....
 5ἄ]νυμνεῖν τὴν εὐδοκίαν
 ὀτανπε[ρ] π[...β].....
]αναν οὐ κ(αὶ) νόων
 τῶν συμπλο[κῶν] γὰρ [.....].

[The fullness] of time joined us Komnenodoukas [. . .] encloses in tombs. Alexios [. . .] to praise the good will, whenever [. . .] not even of the struggle of the (evil) minds. For [. . .].

The katholikon in Varnakova was built in 1077 by the monk Arsenius during the patriarchy of Kosmas (1075–1081), but the fresco decoration in the nave and sanctuary was carried out during the reign of Alexios Komnenos and the patriarchy of Nicholas III Gramatikos (1084–1111). A second church was built by the monk John in 1148 during the reign of Manuel Komnenos and the patriarch Nicholas III Moutzalon (1147–1151).²⁶ When Theodore was proclaimed emperor in Thessaloniki in 1225, he appointed Constantine as the governor of Aitolokarmania²⁷ Constantine is believed to have erected the outer narthex and commissioned the fresco decoration of the Varnakova monastery in 1229/1230.²⁸ Despot Constantine is also associated with the establishment of large secular buildings in Nafpaktos as well as of the monastery of John the Baptist in Arta.²⁹

Another inscription, now lost, attesting to the patronage of Theodore Doukas, was once displayed on a castle tower in Dyrrachion (Durrës) in Albania. The inscription was set up after Theodore's victory over the Latin emperor Peter II of Courtenay in 1217:³⁰

Μαθών, θεατά, τίς ὁ πῆξας ἐκ βάρων
τὸν πύργον, ὄνπερ καθορᾷς, κτίσμα ξένον,
θαύμαζε τοῦτου τὴν ἀριστοβουλίαν.
Παῖς οὗτος ἀνδρὸς εὐτυχοῦς, Ἰω(άννου)
5 σεβαστοκρατοῦντος, ἄνθους πορφύρας,
Θεόδωρος μέγιστος ἐν στρατηγίαις,
Δοῦκας Κομνηνός, εὐσθενής, βριαρόχειρ,
Ἐχθρ(ο)ῖς ἀπροσμάχητος, ἀκάμας πόνοις,
ἔτους τρέχοντος ἐξάδι μὲν χιλίων,
10 σὺν τοῖς ἑκατὸν ἑπταδ[ι]κ[οῖ] ἐγκύκλοις,
τριπλῇ δεκά[δι κ]αὶ μοναπλῇ τριάδι
τρискаιδεκάτης ἰνδικτιῶνος δρόμου
λῆξιν φέροντος ἐν Θεῷ παντεργάτη.

Learning, beholder, who erected the tower from its foundations, [the tower] which you see, wonderful building, admire the wisest counsel [behind] it. This child of a happy man John, the sebastokrator, the flower of the [imperial] purple, Theodore supreme in military command, Doukas Komnenos, firm, strong-handed. Unconquerable by enemies, resistant to pains, when the year ran through six times of thousands, with the sevenfold circles of hundreds, triple decades and a single triad, while the course of the thirteenth indiction came to an end in all-accomplishing God.

Theodore Doukas and his wife also commissioned an embroidered red silk *aer* with the Virgin *orans*, today in the collection of the National History Museum in Sofia (Fig. 3).³¹ The couple's involvement is recorded in a dedicatory inscription in eight dodecasyllable lines running along the cloth's border:

Ὁ σάρκα λαβὼν ἐξ ἀπειράνδρου κόρης
τρόποις ἀφράστοις, ὦ Θεοῦ πατὸς λόγε,
ἦν νῦν ὁρῶμεν ἀνθρώποις προκειμένην
εἰς ἐστίαν, κἄν πᾶσι παρ' ἄξιαν,
δέξαι τὸ δῶρον ἐκ Θεοδώρου τόδε
Κομνημοδούκα καὶ Δουκαίνης Μαρίας
Κομνηνοφύους τῆς καλῆς συζυγίας.
ἀντιδίδου δὲ ψυχικὴν σωτηρίαν.

O Logos of God the Father, you who assumed the flesh from the virgin Maiden in an ineffable manner, the flesh which we now see displayed for nourishment to mankind, even though nobody is worthy of it, receive this gift from Theodore Komnenos Doukas and his fair wife, Maria Doukaina, of the lineage of the Komnenoi, and in return give salvation to their souls.³²

The *aer* can be dated between 1215 and 1225/1226. It might have been donated to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia at Ohrid during the archiepiscopacy of John



Fig. 3 Embroidered *aer* with the Virgin and Child, c. 1215–1225/1226, National History Museum, Sofia

(photo: National History Museum, Sofia)

Kamateros, more precisely, on the occasion of his re-installment in 1215. Another possibility is that it was donated to the new archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos (1216–1236), who was appointed by Theodore Doukas himself after Kamateros's death.³³ In any case, this embroidered *aer* (Fig. 3) must have been ordered before

Theodore's coronation in Thessaloniki in 1227 because the inscription does not mention his imperial title, which he always used in his legal acts, coins, and inscriptions following the coronation.³⁴

Epirus also benefitted from female imperial patronage. Theodore's wife Maria was connected with the Vlacherna monastery near Arta, one of the most important Epirote shrines (Fig. V-1).³⁵ During Theodore's reign, the monastery church was transformed from a timber-roofed basilica to a vaulted structure. A synodal decree issued by John Apokaukos regarding the conversion of the monastery from a male monastic house into a nunnery at the order of Theodore's wife, Maria Doukaina Petraliphaina, is the earliest reference of this church.³⁶ Judging by this source, the transformation took place around 1227. The need to accommodate a group of refugee nuns from Constantinople likely prompted the change of the monastic community, as convincingly argued elsewhere.³⁷ The Vlacherna monastery was believed to be a royal mausoleum of the Komnenos Doukas family since the two sarcophagi preserved in it are usually considered the resting place of John and Demetrios, the sons of despot Michael II Doukas and Theodora (Fig. 4).³⁸ G. Velenis and A. Rhoby have revised the previous reading of the inscriptions on the sarcophagi, which were actually incorrectly joined during restoration works. Instead of belonging to two different graves, as Anastasios Orlandos thought,³⁹ the inscribed fragments are excerpts from a single epigraph. It consists of a long text written in Byzantine dodecasyllable verse and indicates the members of the Petraliphas family and not of the family of the despots of Epirus, as has been repeatedly maintained in scholarship.⁴⁰ The inscription will be analysed later in this chapter.⁴¹

We are uncertain whether Michael II Doukas (1231–1267/1268) was involved in the restoration of the Vlacherna monastery. However, the epigraphic and other textual sources discussed next show that he sponsored three other churches: Kato Panagia in Arta,⁴² the church of the Metamorphosi near Galaxeidi,⁴³ and the Pantanassa monastery near Philippiada.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is possible that Michael was associated with the construction of the old church of the Parigoritissa in Arta as well.⁴⁵

A brick-made monogram with the name of Michael II Doukas is preserved on the exterior of the monastery church of Kato Panagia (Fig. IV-1), on the south *façade* between the two pilasters of the transverse barrel vault (Fig. 4).⁴⁶ Above the monogram on the south gable of the transept, a two-row inscription has been preserved (Fig. 4):

† Ἐκ βάθρων [σ]ῶν πάντα γνεῖς τῶ μ[ε]ν δόμον (Fig.4)⁴⁷

From the foundations, O All-Pure One, we erected your house (i.e., church).

Another metrical inscription, executed in porous stone, is preserved on the northwest pilaster of the transverse barrel vault:

† Πύλας ἡμῖν ἄνοιξον ὃ θ(εο)ῦ Μ(η)τερ
τῆς μετανοίας τοῦ φωτὸς οὐσα πύλη⁴⁸

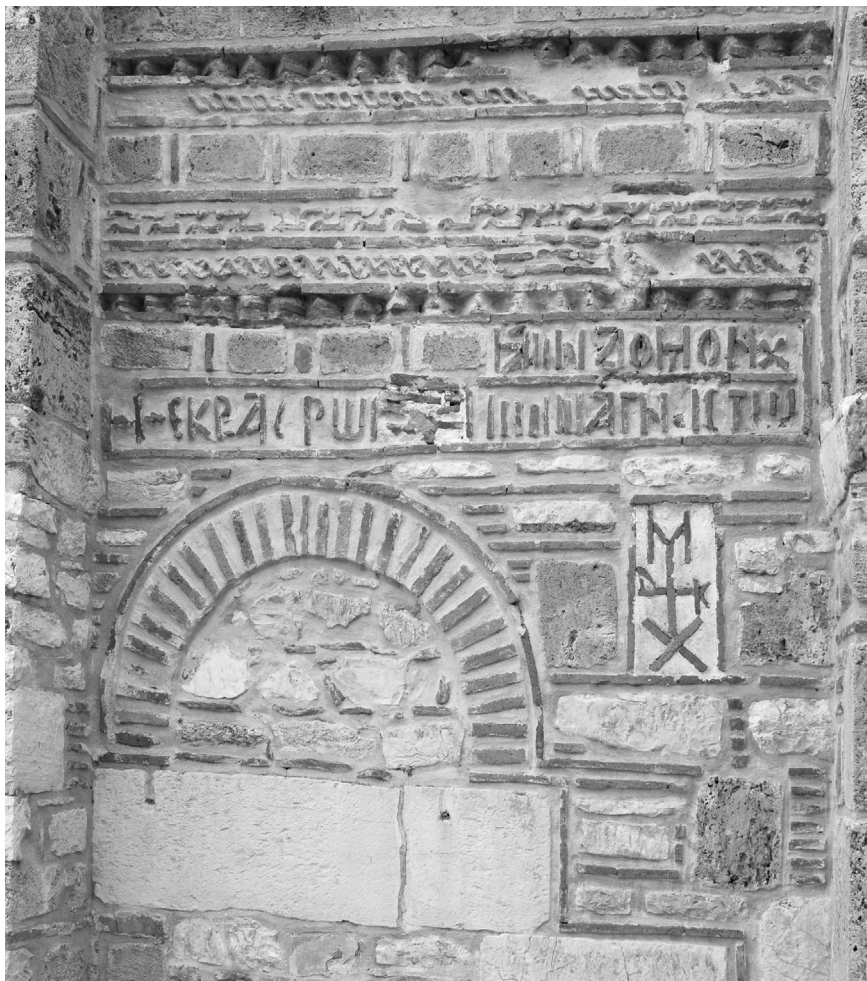


Fig. 4 Brick-made monogram with the name of Michael II Doukas and a two-row inscription on the north *façade* of the monastery church of Kato Panagia, Arta

(photo: author)

Open the doors of repentance to us, O Mother of God, you who are the gateway to the light.

This reading of the abbreviation has generally been accepted and associated with the improper behaviour of Michael towards his spouse Theodora, afterwards declared a saint. In *Life of Saint Theodora*, composed by the monk Job Melias in the second half of the thirteenth century, the despot Michael is credited with founding two monasteries dedicated to the Virgin Mary: the Pantanassa in

Philippiada and Kato Panagia (τῆς Παναγίας) in Arta. The prevalent view that the foundation of the latter was an act of penitence for his poor behaviour towards Theodora cannot be confirmed by her *Life*.⁴⁹ Rather, the establishment of both of these monasteries, as well as of the one of Ag. Georgios, now the church of Ag. Theodora, is related to their founders' piety.

G. Velenis has recently proposed a new reading of the aforementioned cruciform monogram (Fig. 4).⁵⁰ He suggests that the third letter, read as Π in the edition of the monogram, is actually the letter T and, accordingly, the inscription consists of the letters ΔΜΤΡ. The letters represent the four consonants of the name Demetrios. Furthermore, Velenis has detected a previously unnoticed letter X at the end of the monogram. He proposes the following reading of the monogram:

Δ(η)μ(ή)τρ(ιος) Χ(ωματηνός).⁵¹

Hence, Velenis believes that the founder of the Kato Panagia monastery was Michael II Doukas together with Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos who, possibly, retired to this monastery after 1235. Due to the lack of additional evidence, this interpretation must remain a hypothesis.

A post-Byzantine text, *Chronicle of Galaxeidi* (1703), which is based on earlier sources, claims that the patron of the church of the Metamorphosi Sotiros near Galaxeidi was Michael II Doukas. The *Chronicle* was found in 1864 in the ruins of the original church after the earthquake of 1862.⁵² Nicholas Karoulis is the only architect whose name is known during the whole period of the medieval state of Epirus. The *Chronicle* states that he also most likely worked in the Latin-occupied Sterea, at Fragia. Küpper believes, however, in the western origin of Nicholas Karoulis.⁵³ The construction of the church was completed shortly after the incursion of Latin pirates in the Corinthian Gulf. The date of the incursion in 1246/1247 leads us to the middle of the thirteenth century, a chronology that aligns well with the architectural features of the church.⁵⁴

After the death of her husband, Despot Michael II Doukas, Theodora spent the last years of her life as a nun in the monastery of Ag. Georgios, currently the church of Ag. Theodora.⁵⁵ She is considered the second founder of the monastery. Theodora is also linked with the construction and decoration of the cave church of Ag. Andreas the Hermit near the village of Chalkiopoulos in Aitoloakarnania.⁵⁶ St Andrew the Hermit from the village of Monodentro lived during the reigns of Despot Michael II Doukas and his successor Nikephoros (1268–1296). Shortly before the Ottoman conquest of the region, a *synaxarion* life of St Andrew was written. Despite the usual exaggerations, this text includes accurate historic information. The first part of the *synaxarion*, which is included in the *akolouthia*, tells us that the *basilissa* Theodora, by that time a nun, after she had been informed of her husband's death, took personal care of the building and the decoration of the church, which she dedicated to the memory of the hermit, inside his cave *asket-erion* (hermitage).

Two inscriptions are preserved in the cave of Ag. Andreas the Hermit. The first, which is more extensive, is written on the red frame that separates the Platytera from the hierarchs and is attributed to Michael Psellos (Fig. XIX):

-
- [Γυνή, ζύμη, βέλτιστε,] καὶ σάτα τρία
 ἔχουσιν ἐξήγησιν ἀκριβεστάτην·
 ἀλληγοροῦσι τοὺς κ(ε)κριμένους λόγους·
 γυνὴ μὲν ἐστὶ προσφυῶς ἐ[κκλησία],
 5 [ζύμη δε], θεῖος καὶ [θεόγρ]αφος [λόγος],
 δλην συν[εζ]ύμωσε τ[ὴν ψυχ]ῆς φύσιν·
 [τὸ γοῦν] σάτον [πέφυκε] χοίνικες δύο.⁵⁷

Woman, leaven, O my dear friend, and three bushels, have the most precise explanation: they allegorically disclose the hidden meanings. The woman is aptly the church, the leaven, on the other hand, [is] the divine and God-written word, [which] leavened the entire soul; the bushel, of course, are two *choenices*.

The second, which is quite damaged, is situated below the right hand of the Virgin Mary. It is very important since it helps us to date this monument. It reads as follows:

Α[νιστορήθ]η
 Ὁ θεῖος κ(αὶ) πάνσεπ-
 [τ]ο[ς] τοῦ ἐν ὁσίοις
 π(ατ)ρὸς [ἡμ(ῶν) Ἀνδρέ-]
 ον πατρός. ς ψ 4 α (= 1282/1283)
 [ἔτους. Α]μὴν. ἡ [ἔτους] ια ἰν(δικτιῶνος) ἡ [τάδε] μὴν.⁵⁸
 It was painted the divine and most sacred church
 of our holy father Andrew. In the year 1282/1283.
 [year. Α]men. or [year] 11 indiction or [this] month.

If we combine the content of this inscription with the information provided by the synaxarion—ἡνάγκασε δὲ ἡ φιλόχριστος βασιλῆς, ἵνα ναὸν τῷ ἁγίῳ οἰκοδομήσωσιν—we can infer that the church was completed with Theodora's support in 1282/1283.⁵⁹

The decline of the state of Epirus during the reign of Nikephoros (1267–1296/1298) is not reflected in the art of the same era. Nikephoros, together with his wife, Anna Palaiologina, built and decorated with mosaics the monastery of Parigoritissa between 1294 and 1296, as is confirmed by the dedicatory inscription on the west wall of the nave, sculptured on the relief marble arch above the western entrance (Fig. 21).⁶⁰

Κομνηνοδοῦκας δεσπότης Νι[κ]ηφ[ό]ρος
 Ἄννα βασιλι[σ]σα Κομνην[ο]δοῦκαινα·]
 Κομνηνόβλαστος δεσπότης Θ[ε]ομ[ά]ς μέγας
 Κομνην[ῶν] κ[αὶ] λ[α]δος ἀ[γγε]λωνύμων].

Despot Komnenos Dukas Nikephoros, Anna, empress, Komnena Dukaina, the great despot Thomas, Komnenian offspring, branch of the famous Komnenoi, bearing the name of angel.

The couple also sponsored the ambulatory in the Pantanassa monastery to the north of Philippiada (Fig. VIII).⁶¹ The Virgin in the bust, who is holding the Christ child in her arms, crowns Nikephoros and Anna in the donor portraits from this church. Fragmentary inscriptions with names Komnenos Doukas and Anna Komnenodoukaina Palaiologina accompany the depicted figures (Fig. 19a).⁶² Two children, who are also portrayed in this image, are probably the couple's offspring Thomas and Thamar.

Inscription 1:

+ Ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστός
δεσπότης Κομνηνὸς Δούκας
Ἀγγελώνυμος Νικηφόρος.

Nikephoros, faithful in Christ God despot Komnenos Doukas, bearing the name of angel.

Inscription 2:

Ἄννα ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ εὐσεβεστάτη
Κομνηνοδουκίνη ἡ Παλαιολογίνα.
.....

Anna Komnenodoukaina the Palaiologina, most pious in Christ God.

Inscription 3:

+ Ἡ παμβασίλις τοῦ Θεοῦ Μήτηρ λόγου
ὡς ἐκ νεφῶν ὑπερθεν οὐρανοδρόμο<ς>
π<λήθους> στρ<α>τηγῶ<ν ἀγγέ>λων ἀρχηγέτης
κάτεισιν ἄνω τῷ στ<έφει> [κοσμη]μέ<ν>η
5 τεχν<ου>ργικοῖς χρώμασιν ἱστορουμέν<η
κ>όπος [...] ε[...]. εὐλαβ<εστά>τ<ο>υ
τ<ρ>ισε<υκά>λων <τε> εὐαρεστάτων τύπων<ν>.
[...] συντετα<γ>μέν<οι>
ἰλῶς κροταφίζουσι <εὐσε>βε<ίς> περὶ
10 ταῖς δεσποτικαῖς ἀξίαις ἐστεμμένοι
τρόμῳ παρ[ιστάμενοι] ...
<Κομ>νηνοδοκὸβλαστ<ος> ἡ συζυγία
σὺν <τ>οῖς νεθοῦσι εὐθαλαστάτο<ις> κλάδοις.
Ἄμφω κρατοῦντες δεσπό<ται> κλη[...]
15 [...] σοὶ τὸ κράτος.
Τα<ρ>σ<ῶ> σκέποις ἄνασσα ἐν θεία δίκη
[...]ς
Νικ<ηφόρ>ω νέμο<υ>σα πανσθένει σθένει
μ[...]

-
- 20 εἰς τὴν μόνην εὐχαιο [...].
 The queen of all (and) mother of God the Logos,
 as if from clouds traversing the heavens,
 the leader of the multitude of angelic generals,
 is coming down from above adorned with the crown
 5 depicted with artful colours,
 work [...] of the most pious (painter?)
 of the most gentle and well-pleasing images.
 ... arranged
 the pious crowned with the despotic dignities
 10 graciously around the temples
 with trembling are standing next ...
 the couple, offspring of the Komnenoi and the Doukai,
 with the flourishing offshoots spun in each other (?).
 Both despots holding...
 15 ... to you the power.
 With your palm, o queen, protect at the divine judgment
 ...
 granting Nikephoros with an all-powerful strength
 ...
 20 You may pray at the only (?) ...
-

A narthex seems to have been added to the Vlacherna monastery and decorated with frescoes during the reign of Nikephoros around the end of the thirteenth century. There is neither a dedicatory inscription nor any written evidence to confirm the dating of the church with certainty. However, in the fresco decoration preserved on the west wall of the narthex, which depicts the ceremony related to the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople (Fig. 18a), three female figures leading the procession and dressed more sumptuously than other participants are usually identified as Anna Palaiologina of Epirus, her sister Theodora Raoulaina, and their mother Irene-Eulogia.⁶³ The iconography of this fresco shows the triumphal, apologetic, and didactic spirit of this period, as suggested in earlier publications.⁶⁴

Along with the names of a high-ranking military commander, *protostrator* Michael Zorianos, and monk Kosmas Andritzopoulonymos, the name of the *basilissa* Anna—[Ἀν]να βασίλισ[σ]α Καντακουζ(ηνή) [Παλαιο]λόγου τε—is also found in an inscription from the church of Ag. Sophia at the cemetery of the village of Mokista in Aetolia. The inscription indicates their joint patronage.⁶⁵

Basilissa Anna is also believed to have sponsored the narthex of the church of Ag. Theodora in Arta (Fig. I-1) and its fresco decoration, while the erection of a castle known as Thomokastro (literally the castle of Thomas) in the village of Riza (Riniasa) on the coast to the north of Preveza is attributed to her son Thomas.⁶⁶

1.4. Ecclesiastical Patronage

The Orthodox Church had a very important function in Epirus. The Epirote clergymen were responsible for solving many issues connected to citizens and their

daily business, such as legal property disputes, divorces, murders, and testing the validity of documents, and, according to the Byzantine tradition, they also supported secular rulers and their politics.

As mentioned in the introduction, the key figures in the history of the Orthodox Church in Epirus were John Apokaukos, Demetrios Chomatenos, and George Bardanes. Among them, Apokaukos, metropolitan of Nafpaktos, had the role of both spiritual and political leader.⁶⁷ He proposed Demetrios Chomatenos to Theodore Doukas for the archbishop of Ohrid, whom he knew from the time when they were both clerics in Constantinople, and he also appointed George Bardanes as metropolitan of Corfu. Apokaukos could not independently conduct church policy, so he had to bring it into line with the requirements and needs of the Epirote ruler. He often wrote how Theodore Doukas was sent by God to be an ideal Epirote ruler and supported his coronation for emperor.⁶⁸ At a pan-Epirotic council in Arta in February 1227, which included the representatives of the military as well as the entire civilian population, Apokaukos supported the decision to crown Theodore as emperor.⁶⁹

When Apokaukos was promoted to the position of the metropolitan bishop of Nafpaktos, around the year 1200, he did not find his metropolis in good condition. For example, the clergy declined to less than ten people.⁷⁰ Hence, one of his first tasks was the education and renewal of the clergy, monasticism, and churches. John Apokaukos issued a synodal decree ordering the conversion of the Vlacherna monastery close to Arta from a male monastic house into a nunnery.⁷¹ He found justification for his actions in the fact that before 1204, there were many nunneries in Constantinople and that in Epirus, by contrast, there were almost none. The conditions of ordained women in Epirus were appalling, as they were confined to a life in wretched makeshift accommodations outside of church precincts. Apokaukos argued that this reflected the rural misconception that women were spiritually inferior to men. On the contrary, men and women were considered equal in spiritual matters in Constantinople before 1204, without discriminating against the women's ability to follow a spiritual calling.⁷²

Apokaukos's letters testify that in the first decade of the thirteenth century, he was involved in the restoration and decoration of the Virgin Panymnetos, which was the cathedral of the diocese of Nafpaktos. This church was painted with the use of gold (*χρυσῷ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καταστιλπνώσας*)⁷³ and the wall paintings were executed by the painter Epiphanius from Thebes.⁷⁴ Apokaukos's letters clearly show that he was trying to find a painter and a sculptor for the church in order to repair its frescoes and sculptures in the period between 1218 and 1222.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, this church is not extant.

Apokaukos' correspondence also informs us that he looked after the monastery of Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos in Aitolocarnania, north of the village of Kefalovryso. In the cave church of Ag. Nikolaos, a number of frescoes that could be dated to the thirteenth century have been preserved.⁷⁶ According to the earliest inscription, the church is dated to 990.⁷⁷ In the middle Byzantine period, it was a significant monastic centre and housed an important scriptorium. A codicographical note by the scribe Nikon in Oxford Ms. Christ Church 33, f. 225v precisely

dated to 1172 attests to this.⁷⁸ Outside the cave, to the south of the entrance, at a distance of approximately 30 metres, the figure of Archangel Gabriel is depicted with the following inscription in the form of a prayer:

+ΑΡΧΙΣΤ
ΠΑΤΗΕ ΒΟ
ΙΘΙ ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥ
(Λ)ΟΝ ΣΟΥ
ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΑΜ(ΗΝ)⁷⁹

O Archistrategos, help your servant Michael. Amen.

Athanasios Paliouras linked this inscription with the first Epirote ruler Michael Angelos Komnenos Doukas (1205–1215). Moreover, in his opinion, the frescoes located outside the cave church, in the immediate proximity of the entrance, can be dated to the thirteenth century on the basis of stylistic elements, while those inside the cave can be dated to the twelfth.⁸⁰ It is uncertain if the name Michael written on the rock should necessarily be associated with the Epirote ruler Michael I. No other historical evidence can support any activity of the Komnenos Doukas family in the monastery of Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos. However, according to a sigillion issued by John Apokaukos between 1227 and 1230, there was a close relationship between the monastery and the high-ranking Epirote clergy.⁸¹ Along with providing some biographical information about several significant officials of the Epirote state, the sigillion also refers to the economic situation of Aitolocarnia's monasteries. In this way, we learn, for example, that after the death of Theodosios Zikchias (Θεοδόσιος Ζικχίας), the abbot of the monastery of Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos, the monastic community was in a dire economic situation. The duke of the *epispepsis* Achelouu, Nicholas Gorianitis (μεγαλυπéροχος δούξ τῆς ἐπισκέψεως Ἀχελώου κύρ Νικόλαος ὁ Γοριανίτης), an important official of the state of Epirus (lower administrative units were called *epispepsis*) and the Empire of Thessaloniki, found it in poor economic conditions when he visited it for tax collection.⁸² Although it is extremely hard to connect the inscription on the rock with Michael Doukas, it is clear that this monastery continued to be an important spiritual centre during the thirteenth century and that Apokaukos visited regularly.

It has been proposed that Apokaukos could have been involved with the iconographic programme of the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris close to Arta (VI-2a–c). The text of inscriptions found on the scrolls held by the prophets in the dome constitutes a potent statement articulating a vision of the recapture of Constantinople. In these scrolls, it is possible to recognise Apokaukos's texts, and comparisons between the Byzantine emperors and the Old Testament leaders of the Israelites are occasionally encountered in the writings of Epirote clergymen, including those of Apokaukos.⁸³

Demetrios Chomatenos also had a very important role in Epirus. He was promoted to the archiepiscopal throne in Ohrid in 1216 by Theodore Doukas Angelos. He was a judge by profession but also the arbiter to and an adviser of the ruling family.⁸⁴ Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos provided some information

about several shrines erected in the state of Epirus during the thirteenth century but nothing about his own sponsorship.⁸⁵ Only one silver revetment for the icon of Christ dedicated by Demetrios Chomatenos has been preserved.⁸⁶ He apparently possessed this icon during his episcopate in Ohrid (1216/1217–1236), as a dedicatory epigram on vertical sides of the silver frame testifies:

Κόσμος, κοσμήτορ τοῦ κόσμου, σῆς εἰκόνορ
 ἐκ Δημητρίου ποιμενάρχου Βουλγάρων·
 σὺ δὲ βράβευσον τῷ κατ' εἰκόνα κόσμον
 δυσμόρφον αἵσχος τῶν παθῶν μου καθάρας.

The adornment of your image, O Adorner of the world, is <a gift> of Demetrios, the archshepherd of the Bulgars. May you adorn me, who am created in your image, by cleansing the misshapen ugliness of my passions.⁸⁷

The original silver revetment used as a frame for the panel was decorated on the top with a representation of the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist turned in *Deisis* towards the *Hetoimasia* and was last recorded in 1916 in the church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid on a post-Byzantine icon. Sts Demetrios and George are depicted standing in the middle of the sides. Above the saints, on the lower part were three medallions; those in the corners depicting Sts Kosmas and Damianos, while the middle one was destroyed. This is a valuable example that demonstrates high aesthetic standards in Epirus at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

As mentioned earlier, G. Velenis recognised Chomatenos's name in the cruciform monogram from the Kato Panagia monastery in Arta, proposing his joint patronage with Michael II Doukas, who retired to this monastery after 1235.⁸⁸ Due to the lack of additional supporting evidence, this interpretation must for the moment remain a hypothesis.

The church of the Panagia tou Bryoni in the village of Neochoraki (6 km from Arta) is a particularly noteworthy example of the high clerical patronage in Epirus.⁸⁹ According to the brick-made inscription, the church, apparently the *katholikon* of a *stauropegial* (patriarchal-established) monastery, was consecrated by Patriarch Germanos II (1222–1240) (Fig. 5):

Στα[υ]ρωπίγιο[ν] πατριαρχικόν
 Τὸ ἀγι[α]σθὲν παρὰ Γερμανοῦ καὶ οἰκο[υ]μενικοῦ
 πατριάρχου.⁹⁰

Stauropegion patriarchal consecrated by Germanos <who is also> an ecumenical patriarch.

Official documents confirm that the patriarch visited Epirus in 1238 when he consecrated the church of the archangel in the theme of Nikopolis. The successor to John Apokaukos at Nafpaktos was Niketas Choniates, who was appointed from Nicaea. Patriarch Germanos did not want to take any chances and visited Arta in person to establish his authority. This church has a distinct



Fig. 5 Brick-made inscription, Panagia tou Bryoni, Neochoraki

(photo: author)

place in the architecture of Epirus because it is believed that it represents the only exactly dated church. Panagiotis Vokotopoulos proposes that it is the same church that was at first dedicated to the Taxiarches, which were the protectors of the Komnenos Doukas family, while later it was rededicated to the Virgin Mary.⁹¹ It is likely that the monument was not decorated with wall paintings from the outset.

A number of sources showing the activity of lower clergy have been preserved. There is some evidence that a certain priest or monk dedicated the church of Ag. Marina in Arta, which is not preserved. The church was renovated in the second half of the thirteenth century. Evidence that supports its existence is found in the dedicatory inscription contained in the manuscript of St Basil's Rules, dated from 1143 to 1144, which has been kept in the National Library of Greece. The inscription states that John Xanthopoulos gives this manuscript as a gift to the church of Ag. Marina in Arta in 1221, noting also that the church was recently renovated:

Τὸ παρὸν ἅγιον βιβλίον τούτω ἐξωνήθη παρ' ἐμοῦ τοῦ ταπηνοῦ Ἰω(άννου) ἱερέως τοῦ Ξανθοπούλου εἰς νομήσματα δύο καὶ ἀφιερῶθ(η) ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος τοῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ Μαρίνης ἐν τῇ πόλει τῇ Ἄρτῃ ἐν τῇ τοποθεσίᾳ τοῦ Παρορμήτη ἀνακαινισθέν[τι] παρ' ἐμοῦ καὶ ἑτέρων πολλῶν χριστιανῶν... ἀδελφοῖς μου ἀρχιερεῦσιν, μοναχοῖς καὶ κοσμικοῖς καὶ

πάσι τοῖς ὀρθ(ο)δόξοις χριστ[ιανοῖς]... Ἰω(άννου)...Ξανθοπούλου ἐν μηνί
Αὐγούστῳ ἰνδ(ικτῶνος) θ' ἔτους, ς ψ κ θ' (= 1221).⁹²

The present book was purchased for two coins by myself, humble priest John Xanthopoulos, and was dedicated to the church of the glorious Great Martyr of Christ, Marina, in the city of Arta at the site/place Parormites, which I have renovated with many other Christians . . . [with] my brothers bishops, monks and lay people and all the Orthodox Christians . . . [by] John . . . Xanthopoulos, in the month of August, the indiction 9th, the year 6729 (= 1221).

The name of another donor, a certain priest Isidor, was found in the fragmentary preserved inscription of the cave church of St George at Dhivër (Albania):⁹³

...[Α]ΝΟΙΚΟΔΟ[ΜΗΣΕΝ]
... ΝΟΣ ... Ν ΑΓΙΑΝ ...
ΔΕΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΙΣΙΔΟΡΟΥ ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΣΥΜΒΙΟΥ Κ(ΑΙ) ΠΑΙΔΩΝ
ΑΥΤΟΥ
Prayer of your servant, Isidore priest, along with his wife and children

Another donor inscription is preserved in the cave church Ton Agion (τῶν Αγίων),⁹⁴ on the left bank of the Gormos River, a tributary of the Kalama, on the right-hand side of the old road linking Ioannina with Argyrokastro.⁹⁵ Historical sources for this hermitage do not exist. A representation of Deisis with Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and a kneeling cleric monk is situated close to the entrance. Above the monk's head, the Holy Spirit is descending as a dove. To the left of his head, the dedicatory inscription is preserved and reads as follows:

+ΔΕΗΣΗΣ/ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥ[ΛΟΥ]/ΣΟΥ ΚΑ/ΛΙΝΙΚΟΥ/MONA/XOY
Prayer of your servant Kallinikos monk

An important monk with the name Kallinikos lived in the region of Ioannina at the beginning of the fourteenth century. He was one of the companions of St Neilos the Erichiotēs⁹⁶ when he arrived in Epirus and founded the monastery of the Virgin Mary in Geromeri at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁹⁷

Finally, in this section, I will refer to another example of important clerical patronage in Epirus. Michael Philanthropenos, priest and *oikonomos* of the metropolis of Ioannina, and later its metropolitan, founded the monastery of Ag. Nikolaos in 1291/1292. In a rectangular plaque on the lintel of the main church's entrance, there is an inscription dated to 1542 which bears witness of its founder:

Ἀνεκαινίσθη ὁ θεῖος οὗτος κ(αὶ) πάνσεπτος ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις π(ατ)ρ(ὸ)ς ἡμῶν
Νικολάου ἀρχι/επισκόπου Μύρω<v> τῆς Λυκί(ας) τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ διὰ
σηδρομῆς τε παρὰ τοῦ τιμωτ(ά)του ἱερέ(ως) κυρῶ/Μιχαήλ, κ(αὶ) οἰκονόμου
τῆς ἀγιωτ(άτης) Μ(ητ)ροπόλε(ως), Ἰωαννίν(ων), τοῦ Φιλανθρωπinoῦ, ςΩ.
Ἔτι δὲ μετὰ παρέλευσιν/χρόν(ων) + CM + ἀνεκ(αι)νίσθη τὸ δεῦτερον(ον) πάλιν

οὗτος ὁ θεῖος ναὸς διὰ τε θάλλον τὸν ὄροφον/κ(αι) ἀνηστορήθη. διὰ
 σιδρομῆς κόπου τε κ(αι) ἐξόδου ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν ἱερομονάχ(οις) κυρῶ, Ἰωάσαφ, τοῦ/
 Φιλανθρωπinoῦ κ(αι) τῶν αὐτοῦ φητοῖτων ἐπὶ ἔτει, Z^o N, ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ΙΕ'.⁹⁸

The inscription begins with an official mention of the renovation of the church carried out 'with the contribution/sponsorship of the most honourable Michael Philanthropenos, treasurer of the Most Holy Metropolis of Ioannina, in the year 1291/92'. The elevation of the bishopric of Ioannina to metropolitan rank has been recently dated to 1318/1319, and it is believed that the mention of the metropolis of Ioannina in the post-Byzantine inscription is used retroactively.⁹⁹ The parts of the Byzantine masonry, which are visible on the south side of the church, must belong to Michael Philanthropenos' construction. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the priest and treasurer Michael Philanthropenos dedicated a palimpsest codex to the church of St Nicholas 'called of kyr Jakob on the islet'. The codex has been preserved in the Benaki Museum, and it is believed that the donor himself wrote it.¹⁰⁰

1.5. Aristocratic Patronage

The Byzantine oecumenical state has been fraying starting with the twelfth century, and the central authority from Constantinople was incrementally replaced with regional authorities. Members of the aristocracy became more active in the administration and the army, as well as in social life and intellectual pursuits, whether as patrons or audience.¹⁰¹ It is not easy to distinguish between aristocracy and rich citizens, as not every powerful family belonged to the formal aristocracy.¹⁰² However, we can trace some important names in Epirus that are associated with the high aristocracy; for example, Andronikos and Nikephoros from Petraliphas family, who were also related to the imperial Komnenos and Angels dynasties. I will not analyse Epirote aristocracy in detail nor try to identify its individual members since this is not the topic of the present chapter. I will focus on members of the high aristocracy who held civil or military authority, as well as on local archons for whom the evidence shows that they contributed to the patronage of art in Epirus.

During the entire thirteenth century, the patronage of high and middle aristocracy clearly compares in quality with the imperial sponsorship in Epirus, judging by extant sources and monuments.

Several of Chomatenos's acts preserve fragments of information about the patronage of local archons. At the end of the twelfth century, archon George Pakourianos¹⁰³ built a church in Veria dedicated to the Virgin Eleousa (ναὸς δὲ εἰς ὄνομα τῆς ὑπεράγνου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου τῆς Ἐλεούσης τιμώμενος), which was later given to his daughter Helen as a dowry when she married Nikephoros Kounalis.¹⁰⁴ Around 1220, the church was completely destroyed by an earthquake. During the same period, Helen died, and her husband decided to rebuild the Eleousa church at his own expense. Moreover, to convert this church into a male monastery, he appointed a hieromonk to perform daily services in it. Kounalis gave to the church Helen's properties from a dowry she had been given

and also drew a *Typikon* (ὑποτύπωσις) outlining it.¹⁰⁵ The *Typikon* prescribed that the monastery's income coming from its properties should be spent on its maintenance.¹⁰⁶ This church is not preserved; hence, we do not know its size or whether it was decorated.

Demetrios Chomatenos in another act from 1220 mentions that the local archon Taronas built the church dedicated to St Nicholas, next to the old church in the village Tzermenikon (Τζεργμένικον)¹⁰⁷ in the metropolis of Bothrotos.¹⁰⁸ A reason for the building of a new church next to the old one has been attributed to ecclesiological problems in the village of Tzermenikon.¹⁰⁹ The new church from 1220 was built on the basis of the patriarchal stauropegion, while the old one was erected on the basis of the episcopal stauropegion.¹¹⁰ Stauropegial monasteries acknowledged the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople, commemorated him in the diptychs, and paid him the *kanonikon*. A characteristic example from Epirus was the church of the Panagia tou Bryoni near Arta, established by Patriarch Germanos II in 1233.¹¹¹ Prinzing believes that the patriarchal stauropegion did not exist in reality but that it was rather invented by Taron to justify the exemption of his foundation from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Bothrotos.¹¹²

In the Old Metropolis Church in Veria from the second decade of the thirteenth century, the name of a certain John Amarianos is preserved. On the western side of the pillar, in the lowest zone, St Eleftherios is shown in the company of a smaller standing layman who turns towards him in prayer. The representation is accompanied by an inscription which reads: ΔΕΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΟΥ) ΤΟΥ ΑΜΑΡΙΑΝΟΥ ('Prayer of the servant of God John Amarianos'). This John Amarianos is unknown from other historical documents. Papazotos believes that this individual and a certain Marianos Konstantinos, mentioned in a document by Chomatenos,¹¹³ came from the same family.¹¹⁴ Amarianos's exact role in the decoration of the Old Metropolis is difficult to ascertain; however, his depiction may indicate that he was involved in some way.

The very important members of the high aristocracy in Epirus, as mentioned previously, were Andronikos and Nikephoros Petraliphas. The Petraliphas family originated from the Norman duke Peter Aliphas who, after the war with the Normans (1085), defected to the emperor Alexios I Komnenos.¹¹⁵ Alexander Kazhdan in his study on the Petraliphai came to the conclusion that ten members of this family held high titles in the period between 1118 and 1204.¹¹⁶ Nikephoros Petraliphas from Epirus was the great-grandson of the Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos and the great-grandson of Peter Aliphas.¹¹⁷ In the early decades of the thirteenth century, both Nikephoros and Andronikos were powerful landholders¹¹⁸ and regional lords with strong ties to the Angelos and Komnenos families of Epirus.¹¹⁹ For example, the spouse of Theodore I, Maria, originated from the Petraliphas family, as did St Theodora, Michael II Doukas' wife (Fig. 6).

The names of Andronikos and Nikephoros are preserved on the marble slabs of sarcophagi in the Vlacherna monastery near Arta. As mentioned earlier, it was believed that the Vlacherna monastery was a royal mausoleum of the Komnenos Doukas family since G. Velenis and A. Rhoby proposed a new reading of the inscriptions.¹²⁰

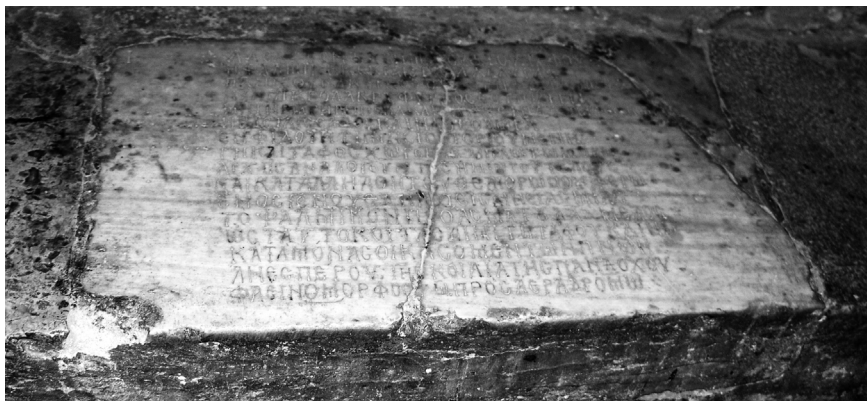


Fig. 6 Arta, Vlacherna monastery, north tomb with the inscription
(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

-
- Τὸ μαρτ[ύριον τοῦτο.....
].έωσι και βιώσκου[σι
 4τῶν] βροτῶν τῷ λαΐνῳ
 ..[.....]τροφει συγγαλύπτεσ[θαι
μα]θεῖν θέλεις
 8 ὁ λίθος οὗτ[ος.....
]ους μένοντα τοῦ πορρ<ω>[τέρω
αῖ]ματος τῆς διπ[λόης
 12τῶ]ν περικλυτῶν σθένει
 Πέτρο[υ Ἀλίφα ἔκγονος στρατηγέτου
 πρόπα]πος αὐτοῦ Μανουήλ αυτοκράτωρ
 [........
 16πεν]θερὸς μέγας ἄναξ
 ἐπὶ δ' ἀδελφῇ γ[αμβρὸς.....
Μιχα]ήλ Δού[κας
 ἀδελφιδεὺς Νικηφόρος
 20 σύνευνος Ἀν]νης δεσπότης δυσμοκράτωρ
 τοῦτον [........
ο]ς ὁ Πετραλίφας
 ἡ δ' ἀπλ[ότης.....
 24] διος ὡς θαυμασία
 ἡ δ' ἡλικία κ.[.....
] εὐνύχου θάρρους
 ἄρῳ.[.....
 28] ἄθλον ἠνδρειωμένον
 μειλίχιον τὸ π[άθος.....
] πετροῦ δίκην
 ζ..]ς δότης ἦν κεκλ[.....
-

- 32]εν ἐκεῖνος ὡς δὲ καὶ τόσος
γένος τιάρ[ρας.....
.....]κὸν τὸ σῶμα καὶ χει[.....
36]ος τῷ ξίφει
καὶ τόνδε λοῖσθον ἐκ λίθου πέρ[.....
.....]της εὐκλειαν ἦρ.[.....
40] εἰς βίον
σαλπινγίσαντος ἐσχάτως ἀρχαγγ[έλου
.....
44
Δημη]τρίου μάρτυρος ἄλλων ἀγί(ων)
τῶν εὐαρέστων [.....
.....
48]

The second portion of the inscription, which contains a section detailing the genealogy of the deceased, is of greatest interest. More specifically, several blood relatives are mentioned, beginning with the ultimate ancestor of the dead, Peter Aliphas. The genealogical tree of the deceased in the inscription on the large tomb from Vlacherna ends with the mention of his relative, the despot Nikephoros, who was the son of the deceased's sister, Saint Theodora. Theodora had three brothers, Theodore, Andronikos, and Nikephoros. Accordingly, the new reading of the inscriptions indicates that these sarcophagi contained the remains of members of the Petraliphas family.¹²¹

G. Velenis has also proposed a new reading of the inscription from the second and smaller tomb:

- Ἀδελφεὸν τὸ χρῆμα τοῦτο τοῦ τάφου · [.....]
This grave is related to siblings · [.....]
ἡ ψαλμικὴ κέκραγε τοῦ Δα(βὶ)δ λύρα · [.....]
David's lyra that plays psalms announced · [.....]
πλὴν οὐκ ἀπείκοδς οὐ]δὲ τῇ φύσει ξένον · [.....]
but not unlikely nor strange to nature · [.....]
4 κἂν πικροδακρύφυρτος ἐστὶν αἰτία · [.....]
even if the occasion is mixed with bitter tears · [.....]
μήτηρ γὰρ ἡμῖν μία καὶ νηδὺς μία · εἰς φῶς παρήξε[.....]
For we have one mother and one maternal womb · brought (us) to light [.....]
Ἡ βασίλισσα Δούκαινα Θεοδώρα · [.....]
the basilissa Theodora Dukaina · [.....]
ἐν φιλότῃτι γνησιοστοργουμένη · [.....]
who sincerely loved in affection · [.....]
8 γῆ καὶ τάφος χωρεῖ με διπλῷ τῷ μόρῳ · [.....]
The earth and grave hold me with a twofold fate · [.....]
ἀρχαῖς ἀναλογοῦντος ἡμῖν τοῦ τέλους · [.....]
since the end for us corresponds to the beginning
καὶ κατάλληλον τοῦ θεανθρώπου φέρω · σ[ωτή]ρος ἡμῶν Ἐμμ[ανου]ήλ.....]

-
- and I endure similar (fate) of the God-man · our S[aviour Emm]anuel.....
 ἐνὸς γένους δὴλωσις ἀγνείας μίας · ἡ [.....] μανου[ῆλ.....]
 The revelation of chastity of one gender · [.....] [.....]
 12 Τὸ ψαλμικὸν πρόασμα τοῦ Δα(βι)δ μέλος · ὡς [.....] βαθὺν [.....]
 Psalm prelude, the song of David · [.....] deep [.....]
 ὡς ταυτοκοιτάσαιμι τῇ τάφου κλίνῃ · ζῶ[.....ἔ]
 ντελου[.....]
 lest I make my bed in the same way on the bearing of the tomb · [.....]
 κατὰ μόνας οἰκήσομεν τῶν πν(ευμά)των · εἰ[.....]νεις φῶς
 [.....]
 In the abodes of the angels we will live · [.....]
 ἀνεσπέρου γῆς κοιλία τῆς πανδόχου · σω[.....λα]ὶ τῷ πλαστ[ιγγίῳ]
 through the womb of the night-less, all receiving earth · up [.....]
 16 φαεινόμορφος τῷ πρὸς ἀέρα δρόμῳ · ἡξ[.....τ]ῶν βροτῶν [.....]
 luminous figure of the course in the air · [.....] of the dead [.....]
-

G. Velenis suggests that the tomb probably belonged to Theodora's nephews, John and Demetrios, and not to two of the three sons of Michael and Theodora. Andreas Rhoby, although reluctant to accept the opinion that the sarcophagi contained two sons of Michael and Theodora, still indicates his belief that this may be the case. He, however, proposes that the children from the sarcophagi are unknown from other sources and suggests a date after Michael's death for their dating.¹²² A mention of the name of Theodora in the inscription was the main reason behind the hypothesis that her sons were buried in the sarcophagi. According to recent excavations at the site, the tombs and their marble slabs were not initially located in the nave of the church. Velenis's new reading of the inscription does not provide sufficient information to ascertain whether the renovation and decoration of the Vlacherna monastery were sponsored by the Petraliphas family or by the ruling house of the Komnenos Doukas. The quality of the sculpture as well as the high quality of painting, with its use of precious materials (lapis lazuli and sporadically gold), show that the workshops employed at the site were trained in the most advanced artistic milieu of the period (Fig. 7).

The military aristocracy held a very important function at the court of the Epirote rulers. They were very active patrons of art, as we can see from preserved sources and monuments. Among them, the most important was Michael Zorianos,¹²³ general and high-ranking dignitary, *protostrator* of the despot of Epirus Thomas (1296–1318) holding the office of the *epi tis trapezis*.¹²⁴ His origin was from Phokis—namely, from the village of Zoriano.¹²⁵

Michael Zorianos participated in joint patronage with *basilissa* Anna Palaiologina and another high-ranking Epirote military commander, Kosmas Andritzopoulonymos.¹²⁶ Kosmas Andritzopoulos was likely a monk or a priest¹²⁷ and without a doubt a relative of Nicholas Andritzopoulos, who was sent to Naples in 1279 as a representative of Despot Nikephoros to negotiate with Charles of Anjou.¹²⁸

Three carved inscriptions with their names are found in Aetolia: two within the precincts of the churches of Ag. Nikolaos and Ag. Sophia and one in situ, in the apse of the Taxiarches, in the village of Mokista.¹²⁹



Fig. 7 Arta, Vlacherna monastery, marble slab with a warrior saint
(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

Inscription 1 from the precinct of the church Taxiarches:

+ Ὁ ταξιάρχης τοῦ μεγάλου Δεσπότης
καὶ δυσμικῆς φάλαγγος ὁ Πρωτοστράτωρ
ὁ Ζωριανὸς Μιχαὴλ ὧδε, ξένοι,
πολλῶν ἐπεβράβευσε τὴν χορηγίαν,
πρὸς ἀνέγερσιν τοῦ σεβασμίου δόμου.
Ὅθεν ποθοῦντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ καρδίας
ἐκλιπαροῦμεν τὸν πανάγαθον Λόγον
τούτῳ παρασχεῖν πᾶν ἀγαθόν).....

The commander of the great despot and *protostrator* of the western phalanx/
army, Michael Zorianos here, O strangers, made numerous provisions for the
erection of this venerable house (i.e., church). Therefore, desiring him from the
heart, we beg the all-good Logos to grant him all good [. . .].

Inscription 2 from the precinct of the church of the Taxiarches, now in the Museum of Thermos:

-
- [...τις ὁ φοιτῶν καὶ παντάπασιν νέος]
 [Μιχαήλ] τὸν δειμάντα τόνδε τὸν δόμον
καὶ μονοτρόπῳ
 Ἀνδριτζιοπούλωντον σπόρον(;) 5
 Ποθῶν δὲ τυχεῖν ψυχικῆς σωτηρίας
 ἤγειρε τοῦτον τὸν σεβάσμιον δόμον
 μόχθῳ πολλῷ καὶ πόνῳ καὶ καμιάτῳ.
 Τὸν γοῦν ἐν πρωτ[οις]....., ὦ φίλε,
 τὸν καὶ βοηθὸν καὶ μόνον παντεργάτην
 10 [πατ...ον] συμπαθῶς.....
 πληρῶν τ... ἄγγελμα τοῦ θείου νόμου
 τον..... [τὸν ἐκ.....ων.....
 ὅπως [πατάξῃ] τῶν κακῶν μου καὶ φ[αύλων]
 ... ν τοῖς σεσωσμένοις.
 15 ὡς πανάγαθος καὶ φιλόανθρωπος μόνος.¹³⁰

[. . .] who built this house (i.e., church) [. . .] and with leading solitary life/with a monk (?) . . . of the Andritziopouloi [. . .] the seed (?). Desiring to obtain salvation of the soul, he erected this venerable house (i.e., church) with much hardship and toil and effort. [. . .] O friend, the assistant and only all-accomplishing [. . .] in sympathy [. . .] fulfilling [. . .] the message of the divine law [. . .] to strike the evil and bad [. . .] to the saved ones, as the only all-good and benevolent/lover of mankind.

Inscription from the apse of the Taxiarches:

-
- Ποθῶν λαβεῖν κάθαρσιν ἀμπλακημάτων,
 Ἀ[νδριτ]ζοπουλώνυμος Κοςμᾶς σὺν πόθῳ,
 Ἐκ κρηπίδων ἤ[γει]ρα τόνδε τὸν δόμον,
 μόνῃ συνάρσει τῶν θείων Ἀρχαγγέλω[v].
 5 Οἱ γοῦν θέοντες ἐνθαδὶ θέας χάριν,
 Ἀρχιστρατήγων εἰ ποθεῖτε τὴν χάριν,
 Κυροῦ Θεοῦ πρόωιστα τὴν εὐσπλαγχνίαν,
 εὐχεσθε κάμοι ψυχικῆς σωτηρίας.¹³¹

Longing to receive cleansing of sins, I, Kosmas, who bear the name of Andritzopoulos, erected with desire this house (i.e., church) from the foundation with only assistance from the holy archangels. You, who flock here for the sake of contemplation, if you desire the grace of the *archistrategoι*, first pray to the Lord God for compassion and the salvation of my soul.

Inscription from Ag. Nikolaos in Mokista, now in the Museum of Thermos:

[Ἄ]να βασιλίσ[σ]α Καντακουζ(ηνή)
 [Παλαιο]λόγου τε - -¹³²

Anna the queen the Kantakouzena and of Palaiologos.

Michael Zorianos had also ordered a luxurious manuscript, the lectionary Barocci 29, preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which bears his signature and provides biographical details:

εὐαγγελιστῶν τοὺς θεοπνεύστους λόγους,
τομαῖς διαιρεθέντας εὐεπιβόλοις
καὶ τῇδε βίβλῳ τεχνικῶς ἡρμοσμένους,
ἅπας ἀκούων καὶ τρυφῶν καθ' ἡμέραν,
ἔστωσιν ὧσι, τοῖς ὑπεκφωνουμένους,
Μιχαὴλ δὲ θαύμαζε τῷ Ζωριάνῳ,
ὀφφικίου ἔχοντος τοῦ τῆς τραπέζης
Θωμᾶ δεσπότου εὐσεβοῦς βασιλέως,
τῷ σπουδᾶσαντι συντόνῳ προθυμίᾳ
σπούδασμα πολλοῖς οὐ πρὶν ἐσπουδασμένον
καὶ καλλιεργήσαντι κόσμοις ποικίλοις
τοὺς μὲν ξενίζει, τοὺς ὀρῶντας ὡς ἔχει,
τοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲ ρήμασι ψυχотρόφοις
εὐεργετῇ ἅπαντας ἀκροωμένους.¹³³

Here are the inspired words of the evangelists, divided into convenient parts and skilfully set in order in this book. Whoever hears and enjoys them each day, listening with ears cocked as they are pronounced, admire Michael Zorianos, who holds the office of the *epi tes trapezis*, of Thomas the pious despot basileus. He has eagerly and zealously produced a work which has not been produced by many before, and he has adorned it with various ornaments. With the latter, he astonishes those who look at its quality, and with the soul-nourishing words of God, he does good service to all the listeners.¹³⁴

In the same manuscript, f. 341v, Michael Zorianos is mentioned one more time, namely in the epigram in honour of John the Evangelist, written by the same hand as the former:

ἄνοθεν αἰτοῦ τὴν λύσιν τῶν πταισμάτων
ἐμοὶ δοθῆναι τῷ πόθῳ κεκτημένῳ
Μιχαὴλ δὲ τάλανι τῷ Ζωριάνῳ
τὴν παντὸς ὄλβου τήνδε τιμιωτέραν
τῶν σῶν φαεινῶν δογμάτων θεῖον βιβλόν.¹³⁵

Ask from above that remission of sins may be given to me, poor Michael Zorianos, for I have zealously obtained this divine book with your splendid dogmas, worth more than any wealth.¹³⁶

It should be added that this manuscript was not produced in Epirus but created and imported for a member of the Epirote court.

Michael Zorianos was probably also the founder of the monastery of Ag. Demetrios in the village of Kypseli in Thesprotia (former Tourkopalouko) dated to the last decade of the thirteenth century. In the south side of the side aisle, on the left

and right of the walled single-lobed window, there is a brick-made inscription with the following monogram: MXΛ ZPN (Fig. XXII).¹³⁷

Another *protostrator* of Epirus, Theodore Tzimiskes, was the founder of the church of Panagia Vellas in the village of Voulgareli (Fig. IX-1).¹³⁸ It is believed that Theodore was probably *protostrator* in the army of Nikephoros I and participated in the battle of Berat in 1281 when the Byzantine troops of Michael VIII Palaiologos defeated the army of Charles of Anjou, king of Naples.¹³⁹ Although the Tzimiskes family name was much older, the presence of a member of this family in thirteenth-century Epirus is not known from other sources. It only exists on a sigillium of Metropolitan John Apokaukos.¹⁴⁰

According to the inscriptions, located on the west wall of the nave above the entrance door, the Church of Panagia Vellas in Voulgareli was built and decorated by the *protostrator* Theodore Tzimiskes and his wife Maria (Fig. IX-3):

-
- Ναὸς ἅγιος.....
 <εὐ κλ>εὸς τὸ συ
 εἰς ὄνομα τέθητο τῆς Θεοτόκου
 εἰς κλίσην συνήρμοστω τῆς <Παν>υμνήτου
 5 Τὸν δόμ[μον ἐδείματο Τζημησκῆς πέλω
 σὺν τῇ συνεύνω τῇ ταπεινῇ Μαρίᾳ
 οὐ μὴν οὗτοι ζηλω[ται - - ν αἰσίως
 πυκνοῖς ἀναλλώμασιν εἰς κάλλος τόσον
 καθωραΐσας εἰκόν<ων τεχνουργία>
 10 Βρυένις ὃς ἐξισοῦσθαι τῶν ἀνωτά[των]
 - - - τος τῶν πάντων Δέσποινα, κάμ[ε
 τα τῶν ἀνελο[μένων—
 τὸ σμῆνος ἅπαν τῶν δικαίων, ἀξίων.
 Ἄλλ' ὦ θρόνε προκ - - - - -
 15 [Πανάχρα]ντε τοῦ μόνου βασιλέως
 παράσχε τοῖς τλήμοσιν ἀφοῖ[ν- - -]
 [ἀμπλακημάτων λύσιν καὶ π]άσις βλάβης
 ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦτο τοῦ τρισολβίου δόμο[ν
 [αὐτοὺς καταξιώσον τὰς α]γιονίους
 20 μονὰς δικαίων εἰς Ἐδὲμ τὸ χω[ρίον
 σκηπτροκρα[τοῦ]ντων τῶν δυτηκῶν φρουρίων
 Νικηφόρου, Ἄννης[τε- - - - -
 Κομνηνοφῶν δεσποτῶν αἰδοίμων.¹⁴¹
-

<Holy> Church [. . .] was dedicated in the name of the Mother of God. It was constructed for invocation of the All-Praised. I Tzimiskes built this house from the foundations [. . .] with my wife, the humble Mary not [. . .] these [. . .] duly adorning through frequent expenses such beauty by the art of icons [. . .] Bryenis who is to be made equal to the highest [. . .] the mistress of all and the bodiless angels [. . .] the whole mass of worthy righteous, but, O throne [. . .] of the only king grant to both the wretched the poor [. . .] from any damage in exchange for this thrice blessed house [. . .] and make worthy of the eternal mansions of the righteous in the land of Eden, of Nikephoros and Anna, who hold the sceptre of the western fortresses [. . .] the despots of the famous Komnenos family.

Although the date is not preserved, however, on the basis of the indiction and the historical context various dates have been suggested from which I would choose the year 1295/1296 as the most probable.

Along with the long inscription, the names of the donors are confirmed in their portraits on the east wall of the narthex, above the entrance to the nave (Fig. 22). In the middle of the wall, the enthroned Virgin surrounded by two donor couples is depicted. They are slightly turned towards the Virgin in a gesture of praying. On the left side, a male figure offers a model of the church to the Virgin. According to the supplemented inscription, the couple on the left side of the Virgin is identified as the protostrator Theodore and his wife Maria:

Δέησις τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ Θεοδώρου πρωτοστράτορος κτίτ[ορος καὶ] τί(ς)
σημβίου αὐτοῦ Μαρί[ας καὶ] πρωτοστρατό[ρισσας]
Supplication of the servant of God Theodore, *protostrator*, the ktetor and his wife
Maria, *protostratorissa*.

The inscription on the right side, supplemented, is as follows:

Δέη]σις τοῦ [δ]ούλου τοῦ Θε(ο)ῦ Ἰω(άννου) τοῦ Τζίμ[ισκῆ]
Καὶ αὐταδέλφου τοῦ κτίτορος [καὶ τῆς
Σημβίου αὐτ[οῦ] Ἀννης τῆς Τζ[ιμίσκαινας]¹⁴²
Supplication of the servant of God John the Tzimiskes.
And of the brother of the ktetor and his wife Anna Tzimiskaina

Another important church was sponsored by an Epirus *protostrator*, known as the Panagia Preventza in Akarnania, dated to the end of the thirteenth century. The church was founded by Vassileios Tziskos who must have been the *protostrator* possibly of Acheloos, where Preventza belonged. The inscription with his name is composed of three verses, written in the pediment over the apse, while two of them extend on all three sides under the sawtoothed course of the cornice. The inscription was written from the bottom up resembling that of Kato Panagia in Arta:

+ Ανικοδομηθη ο πανσεπτ[ος] ναος της υπεραγιας Θε(οτό)κου της Κι
ρη(ό)τησας τον Αγιον Θε[ο]δορο[ν ἐκ] βάθρον
δη ἐξοδου του πανσεβαστ[ο]υ Βασηλι
ου του Τζισκου
Γεωργιου Υκονομου +¹⁴³

One more church in the region of Nafpaktos can be related to the elite of the state of Epirus. The church of Ag. Ioannis Theologos in the village of Efpalio is situated at a distance of 10 km from the town (Fig. XII-1).¹⁴⁴ It was built during the time of Manuel Komnenos (1143–1180), although there is also a second phase from the second half of the thirteenth century that concerns the annexe to the narthex and the north cross arm. Vasileios Katsaros examined the contemporary

and succeeding evidence and concluded that the church, which was used as the *katholikon* of a small monastery, could be identified with the *μονήδιον . . . του Αγίου Νικολάου*, mentioned in a letter of Michael Choniates to John Apokaukos.¹⁴⁵ Sources demonstrate that the church, formerly devoted to St Nicholas, belonged to the monastery of Varnakova.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the existence of scenes from the circle of the *Life of Saint Nicholas* in the narthex shows that the church was initially dedicated to the same saint. Later, for an unknown reason, the church was rededicated to St John. The period of the prosperity of the monastery must be placed to the thirteenth century since all three phases of wall paintings still discernible can be dated to that period.¹⁴⁷

Among other illustrious Byzantine families, which were engaged in patronage in Epirus, a prominent place occupies the Philanthropenos family, mentioned previously,¹⁴⁸ and the Strategopoulos family. The Philanthropenos family, especially known for its patronage in the city of Ioannina, became prominent in the mid-thirteenth century, holding a high position in the army and administration. This family was connected with several imperial dynasties, including the Kantakouzenoi, Komnenoi, Palaiologoi, Asan, and others.¹⁴⁹ The Philanthropenos' family demonstrated its military talent during the Palaiologan period. As mentioned earlier, the Philanthropenoi are associated with the patronage of the monastery of Ag. Nikolaos Philanthropenon on the island in the Lake of Ioannina.

By using literary sources, inscriptions preserved on edifices, churches and art objects, church dedications, and some monumental iconographic programmes, in this section, I identified the patrons and appraised their impact on the artistic output in the new Byzantine statelet of Epirus. Following this, the next four chapters examine how this artistic production reflects historical and cultural circumstances and how it was used to promote the legitimacy of Epirote rulers as well as to maintain their Byzantine identity.

Notes

- 1 Soteres Kissas was the first to attempt a reconstruction of the artistic production in Epirus during the first 30 years of the thirteenth century. Kissas, 1987a, 39–48 with sources.
- 2 Dželebdžić, 2012; Prinzing, 2014.
- 3 The town was surrounded by mulberry groves and produced raw silk.
- 4 Kissas, 1987b, 41.
- 5 Lemerle, 1953, 407, n. 10.
- 6 Pétridès, 1909, 91.14–17.
- 7 Kissas, 1987b, 41.
- 8 Veikou, 2012.
- 9 Vanderheyde, 2005.
- 10 Veikou, 2012, 57.
- 11 Ibid., 58–68.
- 12 Velenis, 1988, 279–286; Vokotopoulos, 1998–1999, 72–92 with relevant bibliography; Ibid., 2012.
- 13 On patrons and patronage, see *ODB*, s.v. 'Patrons and Patronage'.
- 14 Phoskolou, 2013; Talbot, 1993, 250–60. See also Chapter 5, p. 146.

- 15 For the scholarship on artistic patronage in Byzantium, see Cutler, 1981; Cormack, 1984; Cormack, 1986; Kitzinger, 1992; Kalopissi-Verti, 2006a; Dimitropoulou, 2010; Cormack, 2013; Hourihane, 2013; Bevilacqua, 2014, 35–53; Drpić, 2016.
- 16 Cutler, 1994, 299.
- 17 On Byzantine patterns of patronage, see Kalopissi-Verti, 2006a.
- 18 For Chimara, see *TIB* 1, 136–137.
- 19 Bagenetia was the region between the Adriatic coast and Ioannina. See *The Chronicle of Morea*, 1904, p. 592.
- 20 Apokaukos (Bees), 1971–1974, no. 57, II, 49sq.
- 21 Most of these inscriptions have been published by Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 49–59, 98–99, Figs. 3–21, 87, 88; Katsaros, 1992, 517–544.
- 22 See, cat. n. XIV.
- 23 Vokotopoulos, 1967a, 328–330, 1969, 241, pin. 240, 241a, 1970, 299–300, pin. 257–259; Katsaros, 1988, 198–201; Paliouras, 1985, 75–76, 197–200, Fig. 47; Veikou, 2012, 459–460.
- 24 Katsaros, 1992, 532.
- 25 Only a small part of the fresco decoration has been preserved. See Vokotopoulos, 1969 and 1970; Paliouras, 1985, 197–200.
- 26 Orlandos, 1922a; Katsaros, 1992, 518–519; Veikou, 2012, n. 9, 425; Rhoby, 2014, 190–194.
- 27 For Despot Constantine Doukas, see Varzos, 1984, 656–664; Angold, 2000, 219–222.
- 28 Katsaros, 1992, 518; Veikou, 2012, 425, 423–426.
- 29 Kissas, 1987b, 39; Nicol, 1984, 72, n. 23, 199, n. 14.
- 30 Katsaros, 1992, 525–526; Stavridou-Zafraka, 2005, 316; Rhoby, 2011, 321–322, 2009, 108–111, 2015, 225–226.
- 31 Kondakov, 1909, 270–271; Rousseva, 2010, 371–372, no. Te2; Drpić, 2016, 276–279, 294, Fig. 5.5; For more on this cloth (*aer*), see also the following chapter, pp. 45, 51.
- 32 The translation is taken from Drpić, 2016, 276.
- 33 The information about Demetrios Chomatenos's election is provided in two letters by John Apokaukos who proposed Demetrios for the appointment as archbishop of Ohrid. See his letter to Patriarch Germanos II: Vasiljevsky, *Epirotica*, no. 17, 272.29–273; Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1907, no. 2, 233.1–16. For the letter to Chomatenos, see *Ponemata Diaphora*, 10.
- 34 For more on Theodore's title, see in the following chapter, pp. 45 and 46.
- 35 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009.
- 36 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1909, 14, no. 3, 1909; For a detailed analysis, see Talbot, 1996, 399–409; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 60–63.
- 37 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 13.
- 38 For the sarcophagi at the Vlacherna monastery, see Orlandos, 1936f, 30–37, 165, Fig. 10, 26–31; Grabar, 1976, 145, pin. CXXIIIa, CXXIV, CXXV; Pazaras, 1988, 42–43, Figs. 38, 39; Papadopolou, 2002, 76–78, Figs. 85–87, 2015c, 107–117; Rhoby, 2014, 148–151.
- 39 Orlandos, 1936f, 13–14, 47–48; Katsaros, 1992, 522–524.
- 40 Velenis, 2015, 122–126; Rhoby, 2014, 143.
- 41 See pp. 32–34.
- 42 Papadopolou, 2007, 369–396; Giannoulis, 2010, 209–225, pin. 43–50, Figs. 509–520 and references therein.
- 43 Küper, 1990, 109–110; Vokotopoulos, 1993–1994, 199–210.
- 44 Vokotopoulos, 2007.
- 45 Orlandos, 1963.
- 46 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 50–51, Fig. 5.
- 47 Velenis, 1994, 266–268, Fig. 1; Rhoby, 2014, 151–152.
- 48 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 51, Fig. 6; Rhoby, 2014, 153–154.

- 49 *Life of St. Theodora* (Talbot), 1996, 323–333.
- 50 Velenis, 2014, 31–32.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 31–32.
- 52 For the *Chronicle of Galaxeidi*, see Sathas, 1962.
- 53 Küper, 1990, vol. I, 110.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 109–110, and in vol. II, 108–109; Vokotopoulos, 1993–1994, 199–210 with earlier bibliography.
- 55 Papadopoulou, 2002, 45–55.
- 56 Kissas, 1992, 205; See cat. n. XIX.
- 57 Rhoby, 2009, 138. The inscription includes 7 out of 12 verses contained in the Westerink's edition of Psellos' poem 10. Westerink, 1992, 233–234.
- 58 Kissas, 1992, 212–213.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 213.
- 60 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 53–54, Figs. 11–14; Fig. 7; Katsaros, 1992, n. 8, 521; Rhoby, 2014, n. 12, 140–143.
- 61 Vokotopoulos, 2008, with earlier bibliography.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 73–79; Velenis, 2008, 81–85.
- 63 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 81–92, 115–122, Figs. 44–55.
- 64 See also pp. 104–108.
- 65 For M. Zorianos' and K. Andritzopoulonymos' patronage see Chapter 5, pp. 140–141.
- 66 Koutsotoli, 2011. See also Chapter 5, p. 147.
- 67 For Apokaukos' origins, education and career, see Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1903, 463–478, 1906, 334–351; Lambropoulos, 1988; Angold, 1995, 213–215.
- 68 Stavridou-Zafraka, 1990, 120.
- 69 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1913, 258–259, n.4.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 251.6–25.
- 71 See pp. 19, n. 36.
- 72 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1909, vol. 3, 14–20.
- 73 Apokaukos (Bees), no. 57, col. 64–68, p. 112–114; no. 27, col. 38–39, p. 86.
- 74 *Ibid.*, no. 58, col. 22–25, p. 115.
- 75 *Ibid.*, no. 27, col. 38–41, p. 86, no. 47, p. 104; *Ibid.*, no. 54, pp. 110–111, no. 58, col. 22–28, p. 115, no. 103, col. 16–18, p. 153.
- 76 On this church, see cat. XVI.
- 77 Kissas, 1983, 173–174; Paliouras, 1985, 193.
- 78 Paliouras, 2011, 65–66.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 194.
- 80 *Ibid.*
- 81 Apokaukos (Bees), no.6, pp. 62–63; Kissas, 1983, 167–196.
- 82 See also Apokaukos (Bees), 188–189; Prinzing, 1984, 51f and 99; Kissas, 1987b, 171.
- 83 See more in Chapter 2, pp. 53, 54 and 60.
- 84 For the origin, education, career, and works of Demetrios Chomatenos, see the introduction to *Ponemata Diaphora*.
- 85 *Ponemata Diaphora*, 25.
- 86 Kissas, 1987a; Drpić, 2016, 118–21. Fig. 3.1.
- 87 The English translation is taken from Drpić, 2016, 118. For a more detailed analysis of this inscription, see also Rhoby, 2010b, 74–75, no. Ik. 16.
- 88 See p. 21.
- 89 Vokotopoulos, 1973, 158–168, pin. 83–87; Velenis, 1988, 279–280.
- 90 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 49–50, Figs. 3, 4 with earlier bibliography.
- 91 Vokotopoulos, 1973, 166–167, n. 21.
- 92 Marava-Chatzinikolaou and Toufexi-Paschou, 1997, 198–205, no. 51.
- 93 Giakoumis, 2011, 432.
- 94 Chouliaras, 2013.
- 95 Soustal—Koder, *TIB* 3, 281, map no. 2. See also Osswald, 2011, 439.

- 96 The other was Gerasimos. For more, see Vranousis, 1964, col. 499; Nicol, 1984, 244; Tsiouris, 2011, 6.
- 97 Vranousis, 1964, 497–500; Nicol, 1984, 243; Tsiouris, 2011, 15–16.
- 98 Velenis, 2008, 69.
- 99 Chrysos, 1976, 337–346.
- 100 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2004, 16.
- 101 Bibliography on Byzantine aristocracy is extensive. General overviews include Cheynet, 2000, 281–322 Laiou, 1973, 131–151; Kazhdan and Ronchey, 1997; Angold, 1984.
- 102 Cheynet, 2000, 5. On Epirote local aristocracy, see Dželebdžić, 2012, 48–168.
- 103 *Ponemata Diaphora*, 48.
- 104 Papazotos, 1994, 213.
- 105 Dželebdžić, 2008, 234.
- 106 Canon 17 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council requires bishops to ensure before the construction of a private monastery that its founder has sufficient resources for its completion. This requirement did not apply only to construction but also to the subsequent maintenance of the building, as well as the lives of the monks. Thomas, 1987, 229–230. RP II, 625–627.
- 107 On the village of Τζεμπέβικο, see *TIB* 3, 274; Prinzing, 2009a, 25–42, 2011, 87 f.
- 108 Prinzing, 2009a, 80.88–93.
- 109 For the ecclesiological problem and the reason for the church construction, see Prinzing, 2009a, 25–42, (esp. 33, 36–37).
- 110 The term *stauropoleion* was used for patriarchal monasteries from the twelfth century onwards. See *ODB*, s.v. ‘Stauropoleion’.
- 111 See p. 27 and 28.
- 112 Prinzing, 2009a, 36–37.
- 113 Papazotos, 1994, 92.
- 114 *Ibid.*, 92.
- 115 Nicol, 1957, 215–216; Radić, 1986, 257
- 116 Kazhdan, 1974, 93, 116.
- 117 Varzos, 1984, 138–141.
- 118 The act which confirms that Andronikos Petraliphas gifted the village of Munzeni in Kucovo to the Serbian monastery Hilandar is preserved; at the same time, Nikephoros gifted land in the vicinity of Ierissos to the Xeropotamou monastery, also on Mount Athos. See Solovjev, 1938, 46–47; Radić, 1986, 151–289.
- 119 Ferjančić, 1986, 139–146.
- 120 Velenis, 2015, 122–126; Rhoby, 2014, 143.
- 121 Velenis, 2015, 126–129, 137.
- 122 Rhoby, 2014, 149–150.
- 123 *PLP* 3, 6666; Nicol, 1984, 242, 247; See also Chapter 5, pp. 140, 141,
- 124 Hallman, 2004, no. 14, p. 46.
- 125 Lambros specifies that this is the village of Zoriano in the municipality of Krokileio, which is part of Dorida. Lambros, 1906, 475.
- 126 Lambros, 1906, 474–476.
- 127 Lambros, 1906, 474–476.
- 128 Paliouras, 1985, 225.
- 129 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 56–59, Figs. 17–21; Katsaros, 1992, 520–521; Rhoby, 2014, 233–235, 369–373.
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 Katsaros, 1992, 520.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 Hutter, 1977, no. 64, pp. 104–105, Figs. 396–397, 402–405; *ibid.*, vol. 3, 1; Carr, 1992, 567–584.

- 134 This is a common epigram found in a number of manuscripts from the tenth or eleventh centuries onward but in each case modified by inserting the patron's name in the sixth verse. See Bernard and Demoen, 2019, 413.
- 135 Hutter, 1993, no. 19, vol. 4.1, 104–105.
- 136 On cycles of book epigrams in honour of the four evangelists, see Bentein and Bernard, 2011.
- 137 Vokotopoulos, 2012, 91–93, pin. 2, 21b, with further bibliography.
- 138 See cat. n. IX.
- 139 Guiland, 1949, 175; Nicol, 1984, 241; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 98–99.
- 140 Pétridès, 1909, 6, n. V, I. 36.
- 141 Katsaros, 1992, 524–525; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1992, 181; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 54–55, Fig. 15; Papadopoulou, 2002, 123–124, Figs. 143 and 144.; Rhoby, 2009, 146–150.
- 142 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 55.
- 143 Ibid., 56.
- 144 Bouras and Boura, 2002, 147–149, with earlier bibliography.
- 145 Michael Akominatos Choniates, *Tὰ σωζόμενα*, vol. 2, 331–332. For more details, see Katsaros, 1980a, 1980b, with earlier bibliography and citations of relevant sources.
- 146 Rhoby, 2014, 192–194.
- 147 For more details, see cat. n. XII.
- 148 See pp. 29 and 30.
- 149 On the Philantropenos family, see *ODB*, s.v. 'Philantropenos'.

2 Art, the Memory of Constantinople, and the Formation of the Epirote Political Identity After 1204

The political and military accomplishments of Michael I (1204–1215) and especially of his brother, Theodore (1215–1230), justified their ideological claims and aspirations to assume the leading political role as legitimate successors of the former Byzantine emperors and, ultimately, to recover Constantinople. In the state of Epirus, the fundamental principles of Byzantine political ideology were maintained. Beginning with Michael I, the Epirote rulers stressed that they were connected by blood to the Komnenian family and, accordingly, claimed that they were legal successors to the imperial throne.¹ As we mentioned in the first chapter, Michael I signed his name as Michael Komnenos² or Michael Doukas.³ In addition, the sources commonly refer to him as son of sebastokrator John Doukas or as cousin of Emperor Alexios III and uncle of Alexios IV.⁴ Michael's successor, Theodore, reiterated the same claims. This is evident, for instance, from his ktetoric inscription in Episkopi at Mastron (Fig. XIV-2):

The [. . .] brothers [. . .] wearing crowns [. . .] towards the throne of the kingdom [. . .] of the mistress Anna the most reverent, the great Komnena [. . .] the despot Theodore and Constantine from motherhood **all with royal descent Komnenos Alexios** your servant in all ways; for the most beautiful of <the ultimate kingdom> (?)⁵

The inscription, placed at the behest of Theodore on a tower near Dyrrachium, provides another example:

This child of a happy man John, the sebastokrator, **the flower of the [imperial] purple**, Theodore supreme in military command, Doukas Komnenos, firm, strong-handed.⁶

A notable example is also the text on an embroidered red silk *aer* with the Virgin Orans from the collection of the National History Museum in Sofia (Fig. 3):⁷

Receive this gift from Theodore Komnenos Doukas and his fair wife, Maria Doukaina, **of the lineage of the Komnenoi**.

As a result of the conquest of Thessaloniki by Theodore in 1224/1225, Epirus became an empire in 1227,⁸ while Theodore assumed a new title: πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων (faithful king and emperor of the Romans). His signatures on legal acts proclaimed him as ὁ Θεόδωρος ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων Κομνηνὸς ὁ Δούκας (Theodore in Christ the God the faithful king and emperor of the Romans Komnenos Doukas).⁹

Theodore used the same title with imperial iconography on his coins, with the representations of his coronation, which also testifies to his pretension to the empire and, in general, the Epirote rulers' sense of continuity with the Byzantine Empire.¹⁰ Theodore's claim to the imperial succession was supported by members of the clergy, as attested by letters of the metropolitans John Apokaukos and George Bardanes, as well as by a series of legal acts issued by Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid.¹¹ Textual sources are not alone in documenting the political ambition of the Epirote rulers and their attempt to assume the leadership among the Byzantine successor states that emerged after 1204. Such aspirations are also reflected in their artistic patronage, i.e., in the foundation and renovation of churches and monasteries and their pictorial decoration. Expressions of the official Epirote political ideology and propaganda can be further detected in coins, church dedications, inscriptions, and some monumental pictorial programmes.¹²

2.1. Epirote Art and Construction of Byzantine Identity

Marcus Rautman wrote that during the thirteenth century in Western Greece 'around Arta in lower Epirus (. . .) monastic patronage was motivated by the universally felt needs of piety, contrition, thanks and salvation'.¹³ Aside from such perennial concerns, which undoubtedly preoccupied royal patrons across the Byzantine world, I would argue that the patronage of the Epirote rulers was to a large extent informed by a nostalgia for the lost 'Queen of Cities'. Indeed, I wish to propose that they consciously sought to model their capital Arta in the image of Constantinople. In this way, they preserved the memory of the imperial capital, while the carefully maintained link with Constantinople served as an ideological basis in their attempts to restore the former empire. The metropolitan, John Apokaukos, one of the ecclesiastical and intellectual luminaries of the Epirus state, was particularly influential in the formation of this ideological programme. For Apokaukos, who had spent his youth in Constantinople, the former capital was an undisputed ideal. As Michael Angold has observed, '[t]he loss of the city to the Latins must have intensified his attachment to Constantinople and nostalgia must have clouded the reality of the Constantinople of his youth'.¹⁴

One of the ways in which this nostalgia was manifested was through the memory of Constantinopolitan shrines. Probably the best example is the Vlacherna monastery near Arta, one of the most important monastic foundations in Epirus (Fig. V-1).¹⁵ The dating of the architectural building phases of this church and its decoration is a complex matter. The church was erected in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century as a vaulted basilica with three aisles. The basilica was rebuilt at some point later in the same century, after suffering large-scale destruction,

possibly in an earthquake. Only parts of the original church are extant, and the southern apse is the only portion visible from the exterior. This church is prominent in scholarship because it was considered to be the mausoleum of the Epirote rulers. As noted in the first chapter, however, it is now certain that Michael II Doukas and his sons John and Demetrios were not buried in the preserved sarcophagi; rather, the sarcophagi (Fig. 6) are occupied by members of the Petralifas family.¹⁶ At the same time, the new reading of the inscriptions preserved on two sarcophagi in the Vlacherna monastery does not provide sufficient information to identify with certainty who was responsible for the renovation and decoration of the monastery. The quality of the sculpture, as well as the high quality of the painting, with the use of precious materials such as lazulite and, sporadically, gold, shows that the workshops were trained in the most advanced artistic milieu of the period. This, in turn, means that the ktetors were wealthy, too, pointing in this case to either the ruling Komnenos Doukas family or the aristocratic Petralifas. The ruling Komnenos Doukas family of Epirus was closely associated with the Vlacherna monastery. As Apokaukos' decree clearly demonstrates, Maria Doukaina Petraliphaina requested conversion of the male monastery into a female convent. Moreover, her daughter Anna, the wife of Serbian king Radoslav, found refuge in this monastery when the royal couple needed to flee Serbia, first to Ragusa and then to the Epirote Dyrrachium in 1233.¹⁷ The construction of the narthex and its decoration, which is dated to the end of the thirteenth century, can be attributed to Anna Palaiologina, the wife of Nikephoros Komnenos Dukas. Anna's son Thomas also found refuge in the Vlacherna monastery in 1304, when Arta was besieged by crusaders under the leadership of Carl II of Anjou.¹⁸ It is quite possible that this church was located on the Petraliphas' property or that this family was responsible for ktetoric work in the Vlacherna monastery. Having in mind that two ruling females, Maria and Theodora, were members of the Petraliphas family, it seems logical that this monastery had a special status among Epirote rulers, who continued to finance the church itself.

Although we cannot establish with any certainty who was the ktetor of Vlacherna, though it is obvious this was one of the most important monasteries in the Epirote state, I would like to particularly focus on the church dedication 'Vlacherna'. The dedication of the monastery to the Virgin of the Blachernai undoubtedly pointed to Constantinople.¹⁹ One should bear in mind the pivotal role that the Vlacherna played in the consciousness of the Komnenoi. This northwestern quarter of Constantinople was home to the eponymous basilica dedicated to the Mother of God, which was arguably the most important Marian shrine in the city. Under the rule of the Komnenian dynasty, from the late eleventh century onward, the Vlacherna became the political and religious centre of Constantinople. Emperor Alexios I (r. 1081–1118) built a new imperial palace in this locale and made it his permanent residence. The shrine at the Vlacherna, on the other hand, came to be increasingly identified with the Virgin's role as the guarantor of imperial victory.²⁰

The Blachernai basilica was one of the most important churches in Constantinople. A homily ascribed to the early seventh-century author Theodore Synkellos states that, among the Marian churches of the capital, the one at the Blachernai

shrine was 'the head, the metropolis, the Virgin's most divine dwelling'.²¹ Besides, among the great charismatic icons venerated in Constantinople, the *Blachernitissa* held a special place as a symbol of the protection of the city.²² Numerous sources inform us that in moments of crisis, Byzantine emperors turned to icons of the Theotokos, and especially to the *Blachernitissa*.²³ According to Michael Attaleiates, Romanos IV Diogenes took an icon of the *Blachernitissa* with him in the battle of Manzikert in 1071.²⁴

There are not that many churches in Greece dedicated to the Vlacherna, and they were usually in some way connected to Constantinople. For example, Andrew of Crete constructed one on Crete dedicated to the Virgin of Vlacherna following his prolonged sojourn in Constantinople.²⁵

The Vlacherna monastery in Arta obviously followed the Constantinopolitan examples. For example, the architectural concept of the building might have aimed to emulate the layout of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, the mausoleum complex of the Komnenian dynasty.²⁶ The impact of Constantinople can also be seen in the transformation of male monasteries to nunneries, which was supported by Apokaukos. He found justification for his actions in the fact that before 1204, there were many nunneries in Constantinople and that in Epirus, by contrast, there were almost none. The conditions of ordained women in Epirus were appalling, as they were confined to a life in wretched makeshift accommodation outside of church precincts. Apokaukos argued that this reflected the rural misconception that women were spiritually inferior to men. On the contrary, men and women were considered equal in spiritual matters in Constantinople before 1204, without discriminating against the women's ability to follow a spiritual calling. Although it is possible that Apokaukos was too optimistic about this matter, still he likely hoped that Constantinople would prove to be an example that Epirus would follow. By citing cases that were examined by the patriarchal synod while he was still in Constantinople, he also emphasised his relationship with the previous regime that still remained the highest model to emulate.²⁷

One would expect to find a church dedicated to Hagia Sophia in Arta. Both Trebizond and Nicaea, the capitals of two other successor states that imitated Constantinople, had churches dedicated to Hagia Sophia.²⁸ It is not difficult to explain the absence of such a church in the Epirote capital. A venerable shrine of Hagia Sophia already existed in Ohrid, and, hence, there was no need to establish a homonymous church in Arta. Ohrid was, moreover, the principal ecclesiastical centre of the state of Epirus and the see of Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos, who, as is well-known, crowned Theodore as the emperor.

A special link between Constantinople and the Mother of God had already been established by the early seventh century. Dedicated to the Theotokos, the capital of the Byzantine Empire came to be known as 'Theotokoupolis'.²⁹ No fewer than 136 churches dedicated to the Virgin with different epithets are attested in Constantinople before the end of the thirteenth century.³⁰ It is highly significant that, while the Marian epithets used in the dedications of these Constantinopolitan churches are rarely encountered in other parts of the Byzantine world, they were very prominent throughout thirteenth-century Epirus. In Arta, for example, besides

Vlacherna, there was the Perivleptos monastery. The location of this monastery is still unknown, but its existence in Arta is attested by the letters of John Apokaukos from 1222 to 1223, written during his sojourn in this monastery: 'And I myself live in the Perivleptos monastery, lying in bed [sick] as you left me, but without pain'.³¹ V. Papadopoulou has suggested, based on some sculptural remains, that the Perivleptos monastery was located on the spot where the post-Byzantine church dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin and St Merkourios is still standing.³² The famous Perivleptos monastery in Constantinople, established by Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034), was located in the southwest part of the city.³³

Other examples of churches in Epirus with the Marian epithets include Pantanassa at Philippiada³⁴ and Panymnetos at Nafpaktos.³⁵ The church of the Panagia Vellas (Red Church) near Voulgareli was also known by the name of Panymnetos.³⁶ A church dedicated to the Panagia Paramythia is still preserved in Thesprotia,³⁷ while the church at Preventza in Aitolokarnania³⁸ bore the name of the Panagia Kyriotissa.³⁹

Another very popular icon of the Virgin Mary with the epithet *Eleousa* was venerated in Epirus. At the beginning of Codex Cronwell 11, today in the Bodleian Library, dated to 1225 and produced in Epirus, the miniature of Virgin Eleousa with the inscription (M(HT)HP Θ(E)OY Η ΕΛΕ(ΟΥΣΑ). Ι(ΗΣΟΥ)Σ Χ(ΡΙΣΤΟ)Σ is preserved.⁴⁰ This type of icon probably evolved from the Virgin Hodegetria and was very popular in the Komnenian period. The twelfth-century Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople had a church dedicated to the Virgin Eleousa. The veneration of the Hodegetria prototype was widespread in Thessaloniki and surrounding areas since the twelfth century.⁴¹ As mentioned in the first chapter, a church dedicated to the Virgin Eleousa was built at the end of the twelfth century. The church was destroyed in an earthquake and rebuilt again and converted to a male monastery around 1220.⁴²

One should also recall that, after 1227, Theodore of Epirus chose the epithet Hagiosoritissa, another Marian appellation of Constantinopolitan origin, for an emission of his coins (Fig. 8), thereby promoting in yet another way his privileged relationship with the former Byzantine capital.⁴³ The reverse of these coins shows a standing figure of the Mother of God, with her hands outstretched in a gesture of supplication, and a medallion with the Christ child hovering on her chest. Around her figure is the inscription: ΑΓΙΟΣΩΡΗΘΗΣΑ. The obverse shows Theodore in the company of St Demetrios. The ruler is clad in imperial regalia and holds a model of the three towers depicting the city wall of Thessaloniki.⁴⁴ The Dumbarton Oaks Collection preserves another coin of Theodore with identical iconography, although from a different emission, as attested by the presence of the inscription ΑΓΙΟΣΟΡΙΤΙΣΑ.⁴⁵ Due to its official character, Byzantine coinage was a potent vehicle of imperial ideology and propaganda.⁴⁶ The criteria for the selection of a particular holy figure to accompany an emperor on his coins were manifold, ranging from personal devotional preferences to dynastic traditions and current political concerns.⁴⁷ Theodore's claims regarding the throne of Constantinople are reflected in his coinage most evidently by the presence of his imperial titles.⁴⁸



Fig. 8 Electrum trachy of Theodore Komnenos Doukas, National Museum in Belgrade (photo: Vujadin Ivanišević)

It is generally assumed that the epithet *Hagiosoritissa* designates an icon of the Virgin venerated at a reliquary shrine, or *soros*, either at the Chalkoprateia or at the Blachernai in Constantinople. Both of these shrines housed caskets containing Marian relics.⁴⁹ The frontal full-length orans figure of the Theotokos, seen on Theodore's coins, differs from the majority of the Byzantine depictions of Mary accompanied by the epithet *Hagiosoritissa*. Comparable specimens are extremely rare.⁵⁰ The more common iconography of the *Hagiosoritissa* features the Virgin depicted in a three-quarter or profile view, with her hands raised in prayer,⁵¹ as witnessed by numerous examples on coins,⁵² seals,⁵³ and icons,⁵⁴ beginning with the tenth and especially during the eleventh century. Epithets attached to images of holy figures in Byzantium were not always wedded to one particular iconographic type. The *Hagiosoritissa* is a case in point.⁵⁵ The epithet on Theodore's coinage does not seem to invoke a specific Marian icon but a Constantinopolitan shrine dedicated to the Theotokos.⁵⁶ The choice of this epithet for the coins issued by the Epirote ruler provides yet another piece of evidence demonstrating the great prestige that the famed Constantinopolitan shrines enjoyed in Epirus.⁵⁷ The presence of the appellation *Hagiosoritissa* on Theodore's coins further demonstrated and strengthened his links with Constantinople.⁵⁸ This is the only known example among Byzantine coins in the thirteenth century of the frontal (facing) orans Virgin with the inscription *Hagiosoritissa*. This theme may have been taken up again a century later on a coin of Andronikos II (1282–1328).⁵⁹

The choice of an orans figure of the Virgin on this monetary issue may also be connected with the cult of the Virgin with the epithet *Acheiropoietos* in Thessaloniki. Since the thirteenth century, the iconographic type showing a full-length figure of the Mother of God with her hands outstretched in prayer, accompanied by the epithet *Acheiropoietos*, was particularly venerated in Thessaloniki and the areas under its artistic influence.⁶⁰ As we learn from several written sources, in the

tenth century, a miraculous icon of the Virgin *Acheiropoietos* was housed in the monastery of the Abrahamites in Constantinople, a fact that has led some scholars to associate it with the shrine of the *Acheiropoietos* in Thessaloniki.⁶¹ The famous basilica of the *Acheiropoietos* in Thessaloniki was built in the second half of the fifth century, and initially, it was known as the church of the Panagia Theotokos or the 'Great Church' of the Theotokos.⁶² It is not clear when exactly the basilica changed its dedication to the *Acheiropoietos*. Xyngopoulos has suggested that the change took place after 1204, when monks from the monastery of the Abrahamites were forced to move from Constantinople to the region of Thessaloniki, following the Latin conquest of the capital, and that they transferred with them the cult of the *Acheiropoietos*.⁶³ The sources, however, do not allow us to ascertain whether the change of the dedication was connected to the refugee monks.⁶⁴ It is equally possible that the basilica acquired a new name in the course of the thirteenth⁶⁵ or early fourteenth century, again, under the influence of the Constantinopolitan cult of the *Acheiropoietos*.⁶⁶ Whatever the circumstances under which the basilica changed its dedication, the fact that the Virgin orans was especially popular in Thessaloniki and the surrounding areas⁶⁷ makes plausible the connection between the unusual iconography of the *Hagiosoritissa* on Theodore's coins and the cult of the Thessalonian *Acheiropoietos*. It should also be remembered that the iconographic type of the Virgin standing in the orans (or praying) posture, with her hands outstretched to either side, with the medallion of Christ on her breast, appears when it figures as a device of preference on the personal seals especially of people in the circle of the Komnenoi.⁶⁸ As we saw on Theodore's embroidered *aer* where an image of the Virgin orans with the Christ child in a medallion on her chest is also presented (Fig. 3).⁶⁹ Based on the material analysed in this section, we can see that the new state of Epirus established its Byzantine identity on the memories of Constantinople. The Epirotes organised their courtly, religious, and legal customs, their administration, and their art in the image of the former capital. Moreover, from written sources, preserved monuments, inscriptions, and art objects, it is obvious that artistic production in the newly established state of Epirus supported or was often in the function of the construction of the Byzantine identity. In the following decades, the art has been in the very foundation of the Epirote state and in the efforts to preserve its borders and its identity.

2.2. Theodore Komnenos Doukas: Rebuilding Byzantium

Theodore's military successes, and especially his reconquest of Thessaloniki, brought him closer to Constantinople. The desire of the Epirote elite for the liberation of the former imperial capital was expressed perhaps most eloquently by John Apokaukos, metropolitan of Nafpaktos, in his letters to Theodore and his wife dating from the period before and after Theodore's coronation in Thessaloniki.⁷⁰ The metropolitan characteristically declares his wish to see Theodore on the imperial throne of Constantinople.⁷¹

The idea that Theodore's newly assumed imperial dignity was approved and sanctioned by God was expressed in different ways in his monetary issues.

Theodore is portrayed with the traditional symbols of imperial power, e.g., Theodore appears on his coins with Christ or the hand of God crowning him, or in the presence of St Demetrios.⁷² As mentioned earlier, on the reverse of the issue featuring the *Hagiosoritissa*, the Epirote ruler is depicted in the company of St Demetrios, who hands him a model of the three towers depicting the city wall of Thessaloniki.⁷³ In Byzantine Iconography donors are represented offering a church or a castle/city to the Virgin, Christ, or saint,⁷⁴ but on Theodore's coins, it is the opposite: St Demetrios is offering a model of Thessaloniki to him.⁷⁵ As the patron saint of Thessaloniki, St Demetrios grants him protection, welcomes him, and entrusts him with the government of the city. The model of a triple-towered castle as 'polis' expresses the independence of Theodore Komnenos Doukas. The special relationship of this saint with Thessaloniki was undoubtedly the principal reason for the inclusion of his figure in these numismatic types. Besides, one should also bear in mind that the Komnenian emperors were the first to place military saints, and St Demetrios in particular, on *their* seals and coins. Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) venerated St Demetrios as his personal protector, placing the great martyr on his seals⁷⁶ and on coins.⁷⁷ Following the demise of the Komnenian dynasty, Thessaloniki's protector had disappeared from coinage until Theodore reintroduced the saint's image on his coins in 1224. Indeed, Theodore's emissions are marked by a plethora of different iconographic types representing St Demetrios. For example, on a billon trachy with a bust of Christ Emmanuel, a standing St Demetrios holding a haloed cross is imprinted on the reverse. Another interesting example is the billon trachy with St Demetrios in military costume sitting on a backless throne with a sword on his knees on the obverse and with half-length figures of Emperor Theodore and the Virgin holding a patriarchal cross on the reverse.⁷⁸ Theodore's special devotion to the patron saint of Thessaloniki, his new imperial capital, must be seen as an important element of his broader ideological programme. We should also not forget that Theodore was anointed as the emperor using precisely the myrrh of St Demetrios, which was one of the most important arguments behind his coronation as emperor by Chomatenos. Another piece of evidence indicating the importance of the cult of St Demetrios during Theodore's rule comes from monumental paintings. In the basilica of Ag. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, on the eastern side of the southeast pier of the bema, next to the early Byzantine mosaic of St Demetrios with a deacon, there is a fresco showing the standing figure of a youthful male saint in patrician garb. The fresco can be dated to the period of Theodore's short rule over Thessaloniki since its stylistic features correspond with the broader artistic trends of the first decades of the thirteenth century. On the basis of its iconography, the depicted figure can be identified as St Demetrios.⁷⁹ The fresco can be dated to the first decades of the thirteenth century since its stylistic features correspond with the broader artistic trends of the same period.

The desire of the Epirote elite led by John Apokaukos to see Theodore as a new Byzantine emperor on the throne of Constantinople can be observed not only in literary sources and monetary issues but also in monumental paintings preserved in several churches in Epirus. In his study of the iconographic programme of the

dome in the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, T. Papamastorakis has demonstrated that the inscriptions on the scrolls held by the prophets constitute a potent statement articulating a vision of the recapture of Constantinople and the union of the entire *oikoumene* under Byzantine rule.⁸⁰ As is well-known, Byzantine literati often celebrated Constantinople as the New Sion and identified the subjects of the empire with the New Israel. Authors writing after the catastrophe of 1204 drew a parallel between the exile of the Old Israel to Babylon and the exile of the New Israel to the newly established Greek states of Nicaea and Epirus. Just as the Old Israel expected a saviour from the Davidic race who would lead them back to Jerusalem, so too did the New Israel eagerly await the time of their return to the New Sion, i.e., Constantinople, under the leadership of an Orthodox monarch. Comparisons between the Byzantine emperors and the Old Testament leaders of the Israelites are occasionally encountered in the writings of Epirote clergymen, including Apokaukos, Bardanes, and Chomatenos.

According to T. Papamastorakis, the iconographic programme of the dome of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris (Fig. VI-2) ‘reflects a vision of the political and ecclesiastical authority of the Epirotes in this period’.⁸¹ In the zone immediately below the figure of Christ Pantokrator, seven angels are depicted in attitudes of adoration. Underneath are 14 prophets holding inscribed scrolls, arranged in pairs. The prophets are depicted as if engaged in conversation, and the quotations written on their scrolls are carefully selected from:

Deuteronomy (28:66): *You shall see your life in suspense* (ΩΨΕ /ΣΘΑΙ /ΤΗΝ ΖΩ /ΗΝ ΗΜ(ΟΝ) /ΚΡΕΜΑ(ΜΕΝΗΝ)).

Isaiah (52:13): *Behold, my servant shall understand, and shall be exalted* (ΙΔΟΥ ΣΥ/ΝΙΣΕΙ Ο /ΠΙΕΣ ΜΟΥ/ΚΑΙ ΥΨΩΘΗΣΕ/ΤΕ (Fig. VI-5).

Habakkuk (3:3): *God shall come from Theman, and the Holy One from Mount* (draw 3) (Ο Θ(ΕΟ)Σ /ΑΠΟ ΘΕ/ΜΑΝ /ΕΙΣΗ /ΚΑΙ Ο /ΑΓΙΟΣ /ΕΞ ΟΡΟΥΣ.).

Jeremiah (11:18): *O Lord, teach me, and I shall know: then I saw their practices* (Κ(ΥΡΙ)Ε ΓΝΩ/ΡΙΣΟ(Ν) /ΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΓΝ(Ο)ΣΟΜΑΙ ΤΟ/ΤΕ ΙΔΟΝ /ΤΑ ΕΠΙ[ΤΗΔΕΥΜΑΤΑ ΑΥΤΩΝ].).

Ezekiel (37:1): *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord* (ΕΓΕ(ΝΕ)ΤΟ /ΕΠ’ ΕΜΕ /ΧΕΙΡ Κ(ΥΡΙΟ)Υ /ΚΑΙ ΕΞΗ/ΤΑΓΕΝ Μ(Ε) /ΕΝ ΠΝ(ΕΥΜΑΤ)Ι /Κ(ΥΡΙΟ)Υ).

Daniel (3:1 or 4:4): *In the eighteenth year of Nabuchodonosor:* ΕΤΟΥΣ /ΟΚΤΩ/ ΚΑΙΔΕ/ΚΑΤΩ /ΝΑΒΟΥΧΟ[ΔΟΝΟΣΟΡ].

Zechariah (9:9) or Zephaniah 3:14: *Thus said the Lord: Rejoice, O daughter* (ΤΑΔΕ /ΛΕΓΕΙ Κ(ΥΡΙΟ)Σ ΧΑΙ/ΡΕ ΣΦΟ/ΔΡΑ (VI-4).

Many of these inscriptions feature the theme of the liberation of Israel from captivity and their return from Babylon to Jerusalem. The scrolls held by Naum, Zephaniah, Joel, Habakkuk, and Abdias directly refer to the trials and tribulations of Israel’s exile and return. The main means of Israel’s salvation, according to the scrolls of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Malachi, Moses, and Jeremiah, is the word of God—that is, Orthodoxy.

It is beyond doubt that the references from the scrolls to the history of Israel should be related to the historical circumstances following the capture of the

Byzantine capital by the Latins.⁸² The creator of the iconographic programme in the dome of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris must have been a learned representative of the Epirote elite. As Papamastorakis has suggested, he is likely to be identified with John Apokaukos.⁸³

It seems that such comparisons can be traced back to the seventh century when the contemporary Byzantine authors compared Emperor Heraklios (610–641) to David and the story of David and Goliath, describing his legendary single-handed combat with the Persian general Razatis in 627. For example, in Merovingian France, the seventh-century Fredegar's Chronicle, describes this battle, identifying Heraklios as a second David.⁸⁴ The further reference includes the fact that Heraklios gave the name David to his son born after his victory over the Persians.⁸⁵ George of Pisidia compares Heraklios also with other biblical heroes: Moses and Noah.⁸⁶ In his writings, the emperor Heraklios was the constant focus of attention: Heraklios is a new David, a warrior-king restoring to Jerusalem a sacred relic. He is also a new Constantine honouring the Cross and reestablishing the Eastern Christian empire. In a similar way, Theodore Synkellos compared the patriarch Sergios (610–638) to Moses. Sergios played a prominent role against the Avars during their invasion of Constantinople in 626, and for that reason, Theodore Synkellos named him the new Moses who protects his people against the Pharaoh's pursuit (the Avars) and leads the Israelites (the citizens of Constantinople) across the new Red Sea (the siege).⁸⁷ Theodore Synkellos had favoured Old Testament types of victory, like Moses defeating the Amalekites or the royal glory of David, Antiochus favoured weak but defiant figures of Jewish history like Daniel or Moses before Pharaoh.⁸⁸

Such comparisons, however, received particular elaboration in the works of Nicaean authors.⁸⁹ After the loss of Constantinople to the crusaders and the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire, Nicaea played the leading role in the attempts to recapture the Byzantine throne and restore the former empire.⁹⁰ Niketas Choniates in his encomiastic speeches delivered between 1206 and 1216 to the emperor Theodore Laskaris of Nicaea refers to his imperial pedigree and invites him to become a new Moses and a new Zorobabel who will lead the chosen people to Jerusalem, i.e., Constantinople, which the Babylonians, i.e., the crusaders, have destroyed.⁹¹

In the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris there is no preserved inscription or any other written evidence that would refer to the year of its decoration.⁹² Its fresco style is characterised by simplicity in execution and heavy linearity. The artists are based to a great extent on middle-Byzantine art, from which they borrow models for their figures. The most characteristic example is the prophets in the dome. Moses is depicted young and beardless with long hair, like in the dome of St Mary of the Admiral in Palermo,⁹³ of Zoodochos Pege in Samari of Messenia,⁹⁴ etc. The same iconographical type of Moses is represented sometimes at the beginning of the thirteenth century, i.e., in the dome of Ag. Georgios (Episkopi) in Kitta of Mani,⁹⁵ Thari of Rhodes,⁹⁶ as well as in icons of the Sinai monastery,⁹⁷ while in Palaiologan art, he is depicted as a mature man with a small beard. Most of the figures of the other prophets derive from models from

the iconographic cycles of the eleventh to twelfth centuries—for example, the mosaics of the Virgin Mary of the Admiral, of the Daphni monastery, of the wall paintings of St Ierotheos near Megara, of Myriocephala of Rethymno. The figures of Nahum and Obadiah are inserted in the cycle of the prophets at a later date, probably during the thirteenth century, the oldest preserved example being that from Ag. Demetrios Katsouris.⁹⁸ The feature that distinguishes the prophets of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris is the way by which the painter renders a characteristic move to the figures, as if they converse, a usual trait of the thirteenth century, as for example at the monastery of the archangel Michael in Thari⁹⁹ and at the Episkopi in Mani. The fact that almost the whole iconographic programme of the dome of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris is preserved is very important, considering that there are only a few preserved examples of monuments that date to the first decades of the thirteenth century. These monuments include the monastery of the archangel Michael in Thari and Episkopi in Mani. The iconographic programme of the Katsouris dome, which conveys theological ideas and probably political messages of the period, is related to the similar iconographic programme of the monastery of the archangel Michael in Thari. The rest of the scenes of the first phase of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, which are the Nativity, the Prostration of the Magoi, the Presentation, and single figures of saints and other holy persons, follow older models. Stylistically, they belong to a common artistic trend that is known from many churches, especially in the southern regions of Greece.¹⁰⁰ All these iconographic and stylistic features support the previous theory that the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris was decorated in the first two or three decades of the thirteenth century.¹⁰¹

The iconographic programme from the Old Metropolis of Veria could also articulate political messages similar to those advanced in the mural decoration of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris. The mural paintings of this church are dated by Papazotos to the second or third decade of the thirteenth century, i.e., to the period when the town belonged to the state of Epirus.¹⁰² In the second zone of the north wall of the nave underneath a series of scenes from the passion cycle, there are eight prophets holding unfolded scrolls with inscriptions (Fig. 9).

Counting westwards, they include a figure most likely depicting Moses, Aaron, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah or Zephaniah. The prophets are engaged in conversation, just like those in the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris. The inscriptions on their scrolls are carefully selected and inter-related, formulating a unified message that, I would argue, address the political concerns of the time.

The figures carry scrolls with inscriptions taken from biblical books:

Deuteronomy (28:66): You shall see your life in suspense): ΩΨΕ /ΣΘΑΙ /ΤΗΝ ΖΩ /ΗΝ ΗΜ(ΟΝ) /ΚΡΕΜΑ(ΜΕΝΗΝ) (Fig. 10a).

Isaiah (52:13): ‘Behold, my servant shall understand, and shall be exalted’): ΙΔΟΥ ΣΥ/ΝΙΣΕΙ Ο /ΙΕΣ ΜΟΥ/ΚΑΙ ΥΨΩΘΗΣΕ/ΤΕ. (Fig. 10b).

Habakkuk (3:3): ‘God shall come from Theman, and the Holy One from Mount’): Ο Θ(ΕΟ)Σ /ΑΠΟ ΘΕ/ΜΑΝ /ΕΙΞΗ /ΚΑΙ Ο /ΑΓΙΟΣ /ΕΞ ΟΡΟΥΣ. (Fig. 10c).



Fig. 9 Veria, Old Metropolis, the second zone of the north wall of the nave
(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

Jeremiah (11:18): ‘O Lord, teach me, and I shall know: then I saw their practices’: Κ(ΥΠΙ)Ε ΓΝΩ/ΠΙΣΟ(Ν) /ΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΓΝ(Ο)ΣΟΜΑΙ ΤΟ/ΤΕ ΙΔΟΝ / ΤΑ ΕΠΙ[ΤΗΔΕΥΜΑΤΑ ΑΥΤΩΝ] (Fig. 10d).

Ezekiel (37:1): ‘The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord’ (ΕΓΕ(ΝΕ)ΤΟ /ΕΙΠ’ ΕΜΕ /ΧΕΙΡ Κ(ΥΠΙΟ)Υ /ΚΑΙ ΕΞΗ/ ΓΑΓΕΝ Μ(Ε) /ΕΝ ΠΙΝ(ΕΥΜΑΤ)Ι /Κ(ΥΠΙΟ)Υ (Fig. 10e).

Daniel (3:1 or 4:4): ‘In the eighteenth year of Nabuchodonosor’ ΕΤΟΥΣ /ΟΚΤΩ/ ΚΑΙΔΕ/ΚΑΤΩ /ΝΑΒΟΥΧΟ[ΔΟΝΟΣΟΡ]) (Fig. 10f).

Zechariah (9:9) or Zephaniah (3:14): ‘Thus said the Lord: Rejoice, O daughter’ ΤΑΔΕ /ΛΕΓΕΙ Κ(ΥΠΙΟ)Σ ΧΑΙ/ΡΕ ΣΦΟ/ΔΡΑ. (Fig. 10g, Fig. XXI-2).

The inscription held by the second prophet cannot be reconstructed, but the depicted figure can be identified with the prophet Aaron. The chosen quotations foreground the theme of the liberation of Jerusalem, indirectly voicing hopes for the return of the Byzantines to their old capital—Constantinople.

Such references to the Old Testament captivity of Israel would have been highly meaningful in the Epirote context. Indeed, in a letter to Patriarch Germanos II, George Bardanes expresses his hope for the return of the chosen people—that is, the Byzantines—from Babylon to Jerusalem.¹⁰³ It bears emphasising in this connection that some of the inscriptions held by the prophets in the Old Metropolis are unprecedented in monumental painting: Isa 52:13 and Dan 3:1 or 4:4, while others are very rare: Deut 28:66, Ezek 37:1, and Zech 9:9 or Zeph 3:14, at least



Fig. 10a Veria, Old Metropolis, Deuteronomy (28:66)
(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 10b Veria, Old Metropolis, Isaiah (52:13)
(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 10c Veria, Old Metropolis, Habakkuk (3:3)

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

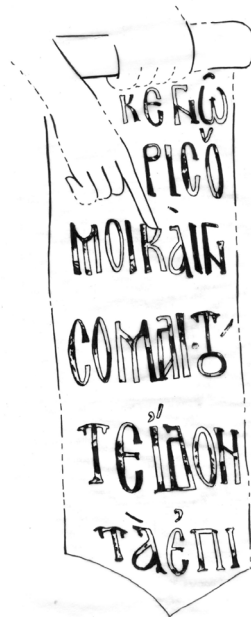


Fig. 10d Veria, Old Metropolis, Jeremiah (11:18)

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 10e Veria, Old Metropolis, Ezekiel (37:1)

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 10f Veria, Old Metropolis, Daniel (3:1 or 4:4)

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 10g Veria, Old Metropolis, Zechariah (9:9) or Zephaniah (3:14)

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

judging by the preserved examples from the middle-Byzantine period and the thirteenth century. For example, inscriptions based on the verse from Deut 28:66 Fig. 10a are encountered in the monastery of Myriocephala in Crete, in St Demetrios Katsuris, and in Omorphoklisia near Kastoria.¹⁰⁴ The verse from Ezek 37:1 Fig. 10e is preserved in Panagia Krina on Chios, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias near Arta, and in the Perivleptos church in Ohrid.¹⁰⁵ The inscriptions on the scrolls held by the prophets Zechariah (Zech 9:9) and Zephaniah (Zeph 3:14) Fig. 10g were rather rare enough before the Palaiologan period. The inscription on Zechariah's scroll is encountered in Ag. Demetrios Katsuris, in Panagia Krina on Chios, and the Perivleptos church in Ohrid, while the one of the Zephaniah's is preserved in Ag. Demetrios Katsuris and the Monastery of Archangel Michael at Thari.¹⁰⁶ All this demonstrates that the creator of the iconographic programme at Veria purposefully selected excerpts from the Old Testament in order to articulate a very specific message.

Among the scrolls held by the prophets, one deserves closer analysis. This is the scroll carried by Daniel, which reads, 'In the eighteenth year of Nabuchodonosor' (Fig. 10.f). It bears emphasising that this inscription is unique in Byzantine mural painting. I would argue that the reference to the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign in Judaea does not pertain exclusively to the historical events alluded to in the inscriptions displayed by the other prophets in the series.¹⁰⁷ It is possible that this specific chronological reference also alludes to the eighteenth year from

the capture of Constantinople by the forces of the Fourth Crusade. In other words, this may be the year in which the figures of the prophets in the Old Metropolis were actually painted. Based on a document issued by Chomatenos, previously dated to 1215/1216, Papazotos and Kravari date the liberation of Veria to around this time, suggesting that certain wall paintings in the Old Metropolis were executed between 1215/1216 and 1224/1225.¹⁰⁸ However, as Prinzing has demonstrated, the aforementioned documents should be dated to after 1220.¹⁰⁹ Prinzing, with whom Angeliki Laiou agrees, suggests that Veria was liberated in 1220.¹¹⁰ After the conquest of the city, which occupied a strategically important position, Theodore's way to the former empire's second city was open, and indeed, several years later, he managed to capture Thessaloniki. It is likely that the inscriptions held by the two westernmost prophets in the series allude to these historical events: 'In the eighteenth year of Nabuchodonosor' (Dan 3:1 or 4:4; Fig. 10.f), and 'Thus said the Lord: Rejoice, O daughter' (Zech 9:9 or Zeph 3:14; Fig. 10.g). The continuation of the latter quotation from Zechariah (9:9) refers to the triumphal entrance of the king into Jerusalem: 'Rejoice, O daughter of Sion; proclaim *it* aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, the King is coming to thee, just, and a Saviour; he is meek',¹¹¹ while the continuation of the quotation from Zephaniah (3:14–15) alludes to the ransom of Jerusalem from the hand of its enemies:

Rejoice, O daughter of Sion; cry aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; rejoice and delight thyself with all thine heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away thine iniquities, he has ransomed thee from the hand of thine enemies: the Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.¹¹²

The eighteenth year of the Latin occupation corresponds to 1222. Finding himself in the liberated Veria, and simultaneously approaching Thessalonike, Theodore was on the way to fulfil his final goal, which was the liberation of the New Sion, i.e., Constantinople.

Conceptually related to the series of prophets in the nave of the Old Metropolis is a scene showing the repentance of David before the prophet Nathan, which is depicted on a pillar below (Fig. 11). This scene, too, carried ideological overtones.¹¹³ As I have already mentioned, the comparison between Theodore and David was common in the writings of the Epirote literati.¹¹⁴ Referring to Theodore's accomplishments in the 'western parts' of the former empire, John Apokaukos praises him for his struggle against his enemies¹¹⁵ and likens him to David.¹¹⁶ One reason for this comparison was the fact that Theodore was fighting with limited resources but with an unfailing will and endurance; as Chomatenos puts it, he was 'naked as David'.¹¹⁷

The representation of David's repentance before Nathan is sometimes invested with royal connotations in the art of the Byzantine world.¹¹⁸ This theme is relatively rare in monumental paintings. It appears, for instance, in Studenica,¹¹⁹ Mileševa,¹²⁰ in the prothesis of the church of the Holy Apostles at Peć,¹²¹ in the gallery of the church of Hagia Sophia at Ohrid,¹²² etc. On the basis of the Serbian examples, S. Radojčić has interpreted this theme as a model for the Serbian rulers



Fig. 11 Veria, Old Metropolis, Repentance of David

(photo: author)

in their obedience to ecclesiastic authorities.¹²³ This understanding is also relevant in the Epirote context. The relationship between Theodore Komnenos Doukas and the highest clergy of Epirus was harmonious. Apokaukos repeatedly praises Theodore's piety and modesty and underscores his wise obedience to religious leaders.¹²⁴ But the image of David falling on his knees before Nathan also exemplified the virtues of humility and self-control that every ruler was expected to cultivate. As Gilbert Dagron has astutely noted,

Power was absolute, did not allow itself to be confined within legal limits and was deemed sacred; but he who exercised it, whoever he might be, was never considered wholly innocent and might at any moment be convicted of illegitimacy. The Church was there to make him kneel, to bind him and to loose him.¹²⁵

The representation of David's prostration before Nathan in the Old Metropolis should be understood in this context. Taken together, the date of the Veria murals, the proximity of the penitent David to the politically charged sequence of the prophets above, as well as the relative rarity of this theme in monumental art, make its association with Theodore highly plausible.

The western side of the pillar with the scene of David's repentance is occupied by an unusual representation, which may also be dated to the early 1220s. St Eleftherios is here shown in the company of a smaller standing layman who turns towards him in prayer. Emerging from a segment of heaven in the upper left corner, Christ is depicted blessing the saint.¹²⁶ The mortal supplicant at the saint's side is accompanied by an inscription which reads: ΔΕΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΟΥ) ΤΟΥ ΑΜΑΡΙΑΝΟΥ ('Prayer of the servant of God John Amarianos'). This John Amarianos is unknown from other historical documents. Papazotos believes that this individual and a certain Marianos Konstantinos, mentioned in a document by Chomatenos,¹²⁷ came from the same family.¹²⁸ Amarianos' exact role, if any, in the decoration of the Old Metropolis is difficult to ascertain.

Equally puzzling is the choice of St Eleftherios as the object of Amarianos' veneration. This holy bishop of Illyricum¹²⁹ is rarely depicted in monumental paintings.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, his representations do appear in several major fresco ensembles.¹³¹ St Eleftherios belonged to the echelon of saints particularly venerated by the Byzantines for their prophylactic and therapeutic powers. He was renowned as a protector of sick and pregnant women.¹³² If included in a fresco programme, St Eleftherios is usually depicted in the sanctuary as a member of an assembly of holy bishops, whether he is shown frontally or while taking part in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. In this regard, the representation of the saint in Veria is unique.¹³³ It seems that the presence of the saint in the Old Metropolis should be related to the significance of his name, which derives from the adjective *eleutheros*, meaning 'free'. The saint, in other words, may be seen as an allegory of the desired freedom from a disease or more likely an enemy, the Latins in particular, as has been suggested by T. Papazotos.¹³⁴ Amarianos's depiction may indicate his involvement in the fresco decoration of the Old Metropolis. On the other hand, one should not exclude the possibility that Amarianos was a military commander who commissioned his portrait after a successful campaign. On the same fourth pillar on the northern side of the nave, the equestrian military saint on horseback is depicted.¹³⁵ The head of the warrior saint is totally destroyed, and his figure cannot be identified. This is the only military equestrian in the church. Horse-mounted warriors, like Sts George and Theodore, make their appearance already from the seventh century.¹³⁶ However, they were occasionally depicted in Orthodox churches in border regions and in areas under crusader control such as Cyprus and the Holy Land, and they began to appear in Greece from the thirteenth century onwards. Sharon Gerstel has pointed out that in Orthodox churches along the borders of Frankish Morea, the shift from standing to equestrian military saints took place during the period of Latin rule. This demonstrates 'Frankish chivalric customs and reveals a certain degree of cultural emulation and symbiosis'.¹³⁷ The special promotion of a warlike military saint on horseback seems to represent the

conditions of the period.¹³⁸ Another characteristic example from Epirus is found in the church of Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra in Arta with St Demetrios and St George represented as equestrian saints on the west wall and the St Eustathios Plakidas on the north wall.

At the east side of the same pier with warrior saint in the Old Metropolis of Veria is represented an interesting and unusual local saint, who was previously incorrectly identified as St Antony the New, *salos* (the holy fool), the patron of Veria.¹³⁹ G. Fousteris, who has recently re-examined the inscription, reveals that the saint's name is not Antony but Theophanes Salos, an unknown person in literary or artistic sources.¹⁴⁰ The epithet 'salos' in Byzantine tradition was related to the holy person who dedicated his life to becoming a fool for Christ in an act of penance and feigning insanity. These persons would sometimes narrate apocalyptic stories and prophecies about the last Roman emperor, as did Andrew Salos in the tenth century.¹⁴¹ The depicted St Theophanes Salos from Veria could also be one who predicted the liberation of Constantinople from Latins or some related historical events during the thirteenth century and at the same time the intercessor and protector of the depicted person who stands under the penitence of David.

The context of the whole iconographic programme of the north pier that includes the equestrian military saints on horseback, John Amarianos, Sts Eleftherios and Theophanes Salos, the scene of the penitence of David before Nathan, just beneath the composition with the prophets with unfolded scrolls and the *kephalophoroi* could express the echoes of the geopolitical events that took place at the beginning of the thirteenth century and the expectations of the donors, who formed the iconographic programme of Veria, of the imminent liberation of the rest regions of the Latin-occupied Byzantine Empire by Theodore.

Apart from the historical reasons, this dating is also supported by the style of the wall paintings. The preserved second layer of the wall paintings in the Old Metropolis of Veria presents today the best example of the presence of different painters who worked simultaneously in a church, thus enabling us to see the development of painting in the transitory period of the thirteenth century. The painters were familiar with the new artistic tendencies of the end of the twelfth century and were willing to follow them. Despite the existence of a great variety of styles and approaches, we can still recognise the artistic relationship with works of the middle-Byzantine period, such as the frescoes of the church of Ag. Georgios in Chortiates,¹⁴² as well as works of the same period, i.e., Mileševa,¹⁴³ Ag. Peter in Kalyvia of Attica,¹⁴⁴ Episkopi in Eurytania,¹⁴⁵ and Ag. Nikolaos of Monemvasia.¹⁴⁶

From all the aforementioned comparative examples, the wall paintings of the Old Metropolis of Veria are closely related in style and method with the frescoes of the monastery of Mileševa and Sts Peter and Paul in Tyrnovo. Without a doubt, these examples support the case of a common centre from which the painters came. Some similarities in the method of execution of certain traits of the wall paintings allow us to suppose that the three churches were decorated by the same workshop. In my opinion, some full-length figures of prophets and hierarchs at the second zone of the north aisle, as well as the scenes of the Descent from the Cross,

the Entombment, and the Holy Women at the Tomb (*Lithos*) from the Old Metropolis, have great similarities with a specific workshop from Mileševa.¹⁴⁷ Sotiris Kissas suggested that the new volume style in the wall paintings of Mileševa was created in the independent state of Epirus. Kissas also compared the frescoes of Mileševa with those from Episkopi in Evrytania and Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki. To these, the Old Metropolis of Veria should be added.¹⁴⁸ Also, the same scholar agrees with the theory about the role of the archbishop of Serbia St Sava in the decoration of Mileševa and the relation between the royal family of Serbia and Theodore Komnenos Doukas. During his last visit to Thessaloniki in 1229, St Sava was a guest of Theodore Doukas.¹⁴⁹ It can be assumed that during this same visit Sava hired some of the best artists and brought them to Serbia to decorate Mileševa where he planned to be buried.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Djurić stressed the relation between the art of Mileševa and that of Epirus. He mentioned the dynastic relations between the Serbians and Epirotes—namely, the wedding of Theodore Komnenos Doukas' daughter with Radoslav, the son of Stefan Prvovenčani (the First Crowned).¹⁵¹ The same scholar proposed that the portrait of the Byzantine emperor on the north wall of the narthex of Mileševa, opposite to the dedicatory scene, can be identified as Theodore Komnenos Doukas of Epirus.¹⁵² However, recent scholars, after re-examination of the available literary sources, have suggested that the wall paintings from Mileševa should possibly be dated to the period between the years 1228 and 1234, namely to the reign of Radoslav.¹⁵³ The fresco depicts Stefan the First Crowned with his sons Radoslav and Vladislav. Sava, the archbishop of Serbia, blessed Vladislav in order to become the founder of Mileševa in the reign of his brother Radoslav (1228–1234). In the wall painting, Radoslav wears a crown, a piece of evidence showing that the decoration must have been executed before 1234, i.e., before Vladislav's nomination as king. Lately, the depicted Byzantine emperor in the narthex is identified as Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) and not as Theodore Komnenos Doukas of Epirus.¹⁵⁴ The former's daughter Eudokia was married to Stefan Prvovenčani. The Serbs believed that this relationship with the Byzantine emperor was very important, considering that the name of Alexios III Angelos was mentioned even after his death in the dedicatory inscription of Studenica (1208–1209), and then he is depicted in Mileševa.¹⁵⁵ This suggestion about the identification of the unknown emperor, as well as the previous one, is not convincing because the depiction has suffered greatly, and thus we cannot read its inscription.

Apart from historical evidence, the latter dating of Mileševa is supported by the possible connection of the workshops of Epirus-Thessaloniki that cooperated at the Old Metropolis in Veria. The decoration of the Metropolis must have started after 1220 and was completed without a doubt before 1229. Some of its painters might have participated in the decoration of other monuments, including Mileševa. The style of the saints at Mileševa and also the characteristic way of rendering the figures with green tones in shaded parts can be found in preserved wall paintings from Thessaloniki and its neighbouring regions, like for example in Chortiates, from the Old Metropolis in Veria and from the church of the Acheiropoietos. The golden background and the imitation of the mosaic technique at Mileševa indicate

that it was executed by Thessalonian artists using mosaics from that city as models.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, we cannot exclude the possibility that some of them were trained in the workshop that made mosaics in Nicaea. As it is known from Serbian medieval sources, Archbishop Sava had played a crucial role in architectural solutions, as well as in the choice of iconographic programmes in Serbian monuments. From 1192, when he was consecrated monk on Mount Athos, until his death in 1236, Sava made many journeys to Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Nicaea, the Holy Land, Sinai, and Alexandria and brought artists with him.¹⁵⁷ His *Life* explicitly states that he brought sculptors from Nicaea to decorate Žiča.¹⁵⁸ Nicaea inherited from Constantinople not only its institutions but also the imperial art attested by its architectural remains.¹⁵⁹ It is believed that the decoration of major Serbian monuments, like Studenica, Žiča, Mileševa, and after that Sts Apostles in Peć, imitates the art of the Byzantine capital. The origin of the painters was from different regions, including Constantinople, Nicaea, Thessaloniki, and Mount Athos, yet they all followed the same manner. Artists from Constantinople/Nicaea, who worked in regions of Serbia from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and also from Thessaloniki, possibly cooperated for the decoration of the church.

The decoration of the Old Metropolis is placed into the sphere of influence of Thessaloniki; namely, it is linked with artists who came from this region before 1204 and collaborated with new groups of artists who arrived in those places.¹⁶⁰ The stylistic features of the frescoes in the Old Metropolis, as well as the historical context, point to the years around 1220/1222 as the date of their execution. At this time, Theodore was already in Veria, preparing for the liberation of Thessaloniki. Theodore's ambition, however, eloquently voiced in the writing of the ecclesiastical luminaries of his time, was the liberation of the New Sion, i.e., Constantinople. The same ambition is also reflected in the Veria murals. While there is no evidence that Theodore was personally involved in the decoration of the Old Metropolis, these murals subtly, yet unmistakably, promote Theodore's political and ideological programme.

The dynastic ties of the Epirus rulers with the Komnenos Doukas family and the expanded territory of the Epirote state, which maintained its independence from both the crusaders and the Nicaeans, were the perfect basis for Theodore to enter Constantinople and become the new Byzantine emperor. However, his defeat by the Bulgarian tsar Ivan Asen II (r. 1218–1241) at Klokotnitsa in 1230, prevented this ambitious plan.

Notes

- 1 For the ideological basis of this claim, see a detailed discussion in Stavridou-Zafraka, 1990, esp. 117–146, 2005, 311–323.
- 2 Stiennon, 1959, 102.
- 3 See Chapter 1, p. 7.
- 4 Stavridou-Zafraka, 2005, 316 and references therein.
- 5 For the full text of inscriptions, see Chapter 1.
- 6 First chapter, p. 17
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Apokaukos (Bees), 272–279; Stavridou-Zafraka, 1988, 39–44.

- 9 Moustoxidis, 1848, 410, 423, 688, Apendice V, p. LVI; Martin, 1882, 379–389, esp. 385, pl. XIII; Miklosich and Müller, 1887, 14–16; Vasiljevsky, 1896, 299; Chomatzenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, 114.
- 10 See p. 52.
- 11 Apokaukos (Bees) no. 69, col. 128, 70–72; Vasiljevsky, 1896.
- 12 For preliminary results of my research on this topic, see Fundić, 2013a.
- 13 Rautman, 1989, 308.
- 14 Angold, 1995, 213–232, esp. 230.
- 15 Paliouras, 1992.
- 16 Velenis, 2015.
- 17 Nicol, 1957, 123.
- 18 Nicol, 1984, 58, n. 97.
- 19 Janin, 1953, 169–179; *ODB*, s.v. ‘Blachernai, Church and Palace of’; Paliouras, 1992.
- 20 Pentcheva, 2006a, 62–63.
- 21 κεφαλή τις ὡς περ καθέστηκεν καὶ μητρόπολις, ὁ ἐν Βλαχέρναις αὐτῆς ὑπερένδοξος καὶ θεῖος ναός. Theodore Synkellos, *In Depositionem*, 754.
- 22 Carr, 1997, 90; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 2005, 210–212; Pentcheva, 2006a, 60–61.
- 23 Pentcheva, 2002, 2, 31–34, 2006a, 55–56, 61–63, 75, 77; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 2005, 213.
- 24 Michael Attaliotes, *Historia*, 152.21–153.14.
- 25 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta Hierosol. Stachylogias*, 5, pp. 169–179.
- 26 Ćurčić, 2010, 565–565.
- 27 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1909, 14–20.
- 28 Alpatoff, 1926; Restle, 1967, 85–86, pl. 551; Möllers, 1994; Eastmond, 2004.
- 29 Mango, 2000, 17–25; Carr, 2000, 325–337; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 2005, 209–217; Pentcheva, 2006a.
- 30 Janin, 1969, 156–244.
- 31 Καὶ αὐτὸς ζῶ κατακείμενος ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῆς Περιβλέπτου, καθὼς με ἀφήκες, πλὴν χωρὶς πόνων. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1909, 22, No 7. See also: Εὐρεθέντων ἡμῶν τὴν σήμερον ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν Ἄρταν σεβασμίᾳ μονῇ τῆς ὑπεραγίας δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου τῆς Περιβλέπτου . . . Apokaukos (Bees), 84. Katsaros, 2007, 25–42.
- 32 Papadopoulou, 2005, 283–302.
- 33 Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* III, 14–16 (pp. 40–42); *ODB*, s.v. ‘Peribleptos Monastery’.
- 34 For the Pantanassa monastery in Constantinople, see Janin, 1969, 215–216.
- 35 We know about the church of the Panagia Panymnnetos and its sculptural and fresco decoration from the letters of John Apokaukos, metropolitan of Nafpaktos, written between 1218/1219 and 1222. The learned prelate mentions the painters and sculptors engaged in the decoration of the church. See Chapter 1, p. 25.
- 36 This is evident from the dedicatory inscription written on the west wall of the church: εἰς κλίσιν συνηρμόστῳ τῆς Παννυμνήτου, Rhoby, 2009, 146–147; see p. 38. The Constantinopolitan church of the Virgin Panymnnetos has not survived. The only reference to its existence occurs in a letter by Pope Innocent III from 1206. Dimitrokallis, 1974–1975, 54. The cult of the Panymnnetos was widespread. Icons of and churches dedicated to the Virgin Panymnnetos have survived in different cities and regions, such as Veria, the Peloponnese, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Kissas, 1984–1985, 363; Papazotos, 1994, 95, 162–163, 216.
- 37 Pasali, 1996–1997, 369–393.
- 38 See cat. n. XVII.
- 39 Another, now lost, church at Veria was dedicated to the Kyriotissa. See Papazotos, 1994, 212–213, 274–275. For the ta Kyrou monastery in Constantinople, see Janin, 1969, vol. III, 192–194. With ta Kyrou was identified the Kalenderhane Djami in Istanbul. See Striker and Kuban, 1997, 7–17, 124–126. A church dedicated to the Virgin Kyriotissa existed in Nicaea as well. See Janin, 1975, 113–114.

- 40 This codex is an important source for history of Epirus and has been very analytically published. See Prinzing, 2011
- 41 On the Virgin Hodegetria, see *ODB*, s.v. 'Virgin Hodegetria'. See also Chapter 4, pp. 104–108
- 42 See Chapter 1, p. 30.
- 43 On the coinage of the Epirote rulers, see Wroth, 1911, LXXIII 192–199, 226, pl. XXVI; Hendy, 1968; Protonotarios, 1982, 130–150; Oikonomidis, 1992, 95–99; Oikonomidou, Touratsoglou and Tsourti, 1992, 101–123; Laiou, 2001, 207–215; Penna, 2000a, Morrison, 2003, 177–192, pl. 1–28; Pomero, 2013, 493–506; Kontogiannis, 2013.
- 44 Marić, 1954–55, 351–352, 1960–61, 22–23, sl. 8–11; Ivanišević, 2003, 47–61, 2001, 87–88. Examples of the same emissions are preserved in the Dumbarton Oaks collection. See Hendy, 1969, 268, Pl. 37, 3–4; Morrison, 2003, 177, Figs. 6, 7. See also Penna, 2002, 212.
- 45 Hendy, 1968, vol. 4, part 2, pl. XXXVIII, 2c.
- 46 See Protonotarios, 1982, 134–140, note 54. More on the coinage and imperial propaganda, see Penna, 2002, 48–63, 125–138.
- 47 Penna, 2002, 59.
- 48 See p. 46.
- 49 Ebersolt, 1921, 57; Janin, 1969, 169, 250; *ODB*, s.v. 'Soros'. In addition, a chapel known as the *Hagia Soros* existed at the Constantinopolitan monastery ta Kyrou. See Michael Psellos, *Ἐγκώμιον*, no. 37, col. 298–299; Pentcheva, 2006a, 244, note 32.
- 50 Bertelè, 1958, 233–234; Hendy, 1969, 196, pl. 27.8–9.
- 51 On this iconographic type, see Neressian, 1960, 78, 83, Fig. 3.
- 52 Bertelè, 1951a; Hendy, 1969, 196, 268, pl. 27.8–9, 37, 3–4.; G. Touratsoglou in his article compiled a catalogue of coins and seals with depictions of the *Hagiosoritissa*. See Touratsoglou, 1992, 604–605. See also Penna, 2000a, 212, pl. 149.
- 53 Seibt, 1987, 48–50, bil. 11; Touratsoglou, op. cit., 600–605; Hunger, 1994, 135, 138, abb. 2b/1, 2c/1.
- 54 Sotiriou, 1956–58, 146–147, vol. 2, 125; Baltogianni, 2000, 147–148, pin. 87, 90; Carr, 2002, 78–80, Fig. 6.
- 55 Grabar, 1974, 3; Miljković, 2006, 330. It should be mentioned that a seal from the Orghidan collection bears a depiction of the Virgin holding the Christ child accompanied by the epithet *Hagiosoritissa*. See Laurent, 1952, 234, pl. LIX (466).
- 56 A comparable example is the fresco-icon of the Virgin *Pammakaristos* in the church of Hagia Sophia at Ohrid. In relation to this image, Kissas states that its iconographic type was not dependent on the Constantinopolitan prototype of the *Pammakaristos*. Kissas, 1984–85, 362.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 363.
- 58 The epithet *Hagiosoritissa* is present on coins of Manuel I Komnenos (1118–1180) (Hendy, 1969, 119–120, pl. 17.7–8; Penna, 2000b, 195–196, Fig. 1), Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) (Penna, 2000b, 196–198, Fig. 3; and John III Doukas Vatatzes, Emperor of Nicaea (1221–1254) (Hendy, 1969, 245, pl. 34.8).
- 59 Morrison, 2003, 183, Fig. 38.
- 60 The standing Virgin orans with the epithet *Acheiropoietos* also appears in the sanctuary apses of churches located in the wider area of Byzantine Macedonia, as, for instance, at Kastoria, Veria, Prilep, and elsewhere. See Tsitouridou, 1986, 63–65, pin. 1, 2.; Koco and Miljković-Peppek, 1958, 43, 50, ph. 42; Gerstel, 1999, fig 1, 31, 36.
- 61 Xyngopoulos, 1952, 11.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 1–26; Janin, 1975, 375–376; Papazotos, 1982, 112–131; Paisidu, 2010, 260–272.
- 63 Xyngopoulos, 1952, 14–19.
- 64 Janin, 1975, 377–378; Miljković, 2006, 332.
- 65 Konstantinidi, 2003a, 89–98.
- 66 Janin, 1975, 376–377.

- 67 See also the stone figures of facing Virgin orans from Hosios David in Thessaloniki, now in Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki. See Xyngopoulos, 1952.
- 68 For the first time in a single surviving silver coin of the empresses Zoe and Theodora (1042). It first appears in the eleventh century but gains wider popularity and appears in increasing frequency in monumental painting in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, usually in the apse conch of side chapels or even in the main sanctuary in churches throughout Greece and Cyprus. See Carr and Morrocco, 1991, pl. 27–30.
- 69 See Chapter 1, p. 18, Fig. 3.
- 70 See Dželebžić, 2008, 127–133, 136.
- 71 Apokaukos (Bees), no. 69.70–72; Dželebžić, 2008, 137–138.
- 72 Hendy, 1969, 268–271, pl. 37/3–4, 5–6, 38/3–4, 5; Penna, 2000b, 201–202; Morrison, 2003, 177, 181, ill. 8–10; Ivanišević, 2003, Fig. 1; Kontogiannis, 2013, 715–719, Fig. 2; Pomero, 2013, 499–500, Fig. 3.
- 73 Morrison, 2003, Figs. 6, 7,
- 74 For the analysis of different architectural models in Byzantine art, see Marinković, 2007.
- 75 For the representation of a triple-towered castle on Theodore's coins, see Kontogiannis, 2013, 713–744.
- 76 Penna, 2000b, 198–199, 201, Figs. 4, 7, 10.
- 77 Morrison, 2003, 174, fig 2.
- 78 For additional examples of Theodore's coins with representations of St Demetrios, see Morrison, 2003, Figs. 8–14.
- 79 Tsigaridas, 1996b, 209–212.
- 80 Papamastorakis, 1992.
- 81 Ibid., 436.
- 82 Ibid., 434.
- 83 Ibid., 436.
- 84 'Following his usual practice, the Persian emperor sent an army against Heraclius. . . . Heraclius armed himself, left behind him his army drawn up in fighting array, and advanced to the fray like a second David'. See Wallace-Hadrill, 1960, 52–53. See also the Cyprus Plates with representation from David's life. Steven Wander proposed that they formed a unified group with a precise meaning which could be connected with Heraklios' life. See Wander, 1973, 89–104; Wander, 1975, 345–346.
- 85 Heraklios was also compared to other biblical heroes. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 489–492. See also Grabar, 1936, 96–97.
- 86 Whitby, 1994, 197–225; Whitby, 1998, 247–273; Booth, 2014, 159–161; Wander, 1973, 89–104, p. 103; Grabar, 1936, 96–97.
- 87 Pentcheva, 2002, 9–10.
- 88 Olster, 1994, 82.
- 89 Anagnostakis, 2001, 325–346, especially p. 334.
- 90 For the importance of rhetoric in the formation and propagation of the ideology of the Nicaean emperors, see Radošević, 1987, 69–85; Angelov, 2007, *passim*.
- 91 *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et epistulae*, 13, p. 128, 14, p. 147; Radošević, 1987, 70; Papamastorakis, 1992, 434.
- 92 For the iconographic programme and style, see Giannoulis, 2010, 111–179, pin. 14–31, Figs. 78–143; Papadopoulou, 2002, 29–33.
- 93 Demus, 1949, Fig. 48a.
- 94 Sotiriou, 1964–1965, pin. 51 1.
- 95 Papamastorakis, 1987–1988, 149.
- 96 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2006, 76, pin. 17a.
- 97 Mouriki, 1995, 531–546; Mouriki, 1991–1992, 171–184.
- 98 Papamastorakis, 2001, 229, 231.
- 99 Kefala, 2015, 215, 25, Fig. 63.
- 100 See, for example, St Peter in Kalyvia-Kouvara (Coumbaraki-Pansélinou, 1976), the Virgin Mary in Merenta or in churches of the Dodecanese Islands (Katsioti, 2000).

- 101 Kalopissi-Verti, 1984b, 226, 1999, 67; Giannoulis, 2010, 111–179.
- 102 Papazotos, 1994, 242–249.
- 103 Loenertz, 1964, 114–115; Papamastorakis, 1992, 435. The account of Theodore Synkellos is characterised by the constant reference to Old Testament figures and events. Sergios is represented as the New Moses who protects his people against the Pharaoh's pursuit (the Avars) and leads the Israelites (the citizens of Constantinople) across the new Red Sea (the siege). Pentcheva, 2002, 9–10.
- 104 See Papamastorakis, 2001, 185. A variation on the verse from Deuteronomy (28:66) is found on the scroll held by Moses in Manastir, North Macedonia. See Kostovska, 2020, 258, 258. Fig. 289. Moses holds the same in the hermitage of Ag. Neophytos in Cyprus and in the Church of Christ in Veria.
- 105 The inscription was more common during the Palaiologan period. See Papamastorakis, 2001, 212, 214.
- 106 See Papamastorakis, 2001, 236, 237, 239, 240. pin. 21, 22.
- 107 Nebuchadnezzar (605–562) was a king of Babylon and the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He besieged Jerusalem twice, in 597 and 586 bce, when he destroyed the city and exiled to Babylonia a large portion of its population. The events of his rule are recorded in the first chapters of the Book of Daniel and Chapter 24 of the Second Book of Kings.
- 108 Kravari, 1989, 41, 64; Papazotos, 1994, 39, 234–244.
- 109 Prinzing, 1983, 41, 54, n. 72; *Ponemata Diaphora*, 83.
- 110 Laiou, 1992, 145.
- 111 Χαῖρε σφόδρα, θύγατερ Σιών, κήρυσσε, θύγατερ Ἱερουσαλὴμ· ἰδοὺ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἔρχεται σοι, δίκαιος καὶ σφύζων αὐτός, πρᾶυς.
- 112 Χαῖρε σφόδρα, θύγατερ Σιών, κήρυσσε, θύγατερ Ἱερουσαλὴμ, εὐφραίνου καὶ κατατέρπου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, θύγατερ Ἱερουσαλὴμ. Περιεῖλεν Κύριος τὰ ἀδικήματά σου, λελύτρωται σε ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν σου βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ. Κύριος ἐν μέσῳ σου οὐκ ὄγη κακὰ οὐκέτι. It should be noted that this biblical verse informs the comparison between Constantinople and Sion encountered in an oration that Nikephoros Chrysovergis delivered to the Emperor Alexios III Angelos at the beginning of 1202, after the emperor's campaign against Ivanko: Σὺ δ' ἄλλ' ἐξ ἐθάρσεως πρᾶτοτος ἐπιδημῆς ἡμῖν, καλλίνικε, μέτριος καὶ σχεδιάζεις τὴν ἐπάνοδοι εὐσυντέλεστον, Χριστὸν ζήλων τὸν συγκαταβαίνοντα· ὥστε καὶ τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ λέγεσθαι διὰ σε· 'θάρσει Σιών· ἰδοὺ, ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἔρχεται σοι σώζων τε ὁμοῦ καὶ πρᾶυς' ('But you, who are customarily exceedingly meek, come to us, O gloriously triumphant one, in modesty and devise a perfect return, emulating Christ's condescension, so that in this city, too, the following may be said because of you: 'Be of good courage, Sion; behold, your king is coming to you, having salvation and meek'). Nichephorus Chrysoberges, *Ad angelos*, 21.
- 113 Papazotos, 1994, 243–245.
- 114 See pp. 53 and 54.
- 115 αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐγένετο ρήστης μετὰ θεὸν καὶ σωτὴρ ἡμέτερος . . . καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς μέρη ταῦτα τὰ δυτικὰ ἰδρῶσιν ἀμέτροις καὶ πόνων ὑπερβολαῖς ἀπαξάπαντα αἰχμαλωτισθέντα τε καὶ ἀφανισθέντα εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν χριστιανικὴν ἀποκαταστήσας διαγωγὴν καὶ κατάστασιν καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν καὶ δυσαρίθμους ἀνακαθάρας ὄχλους Λατινικοὺς τε καὶ Σκυθικοὺς. *Πρᾶξις συνοδικὴ περὶ τῆς τοῦ δεσπότη Θεοδώρου εἰς βασιλεῖα ἀναγορεύσεως*. See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1913, col. 16–22, p. 258; Apokaukos (Bees), no. 107. col. 69–74.
- 116 ὁμάλιζε τοὺς ὄχθους, ὁπόσους ἡμῖν Ἰταλικὴ τυραννὶς ἐπεβόθρευεν, ἀπογνάθου τούτους τοὺς λέοντας, γίνου τῷ ἄλλοφύλῳ ἔθνει **νέος Δαυὶδ**, βάλε ἐν τῷ πολεμικῷ σου καδίῳ τρεῖς λίθους, τῆς ἰσοσθενοῦς τριάδος τὴν δύναμιν, σφενδόνῃσον αὐτοὺς κατὰ τοῦ ἄλλοφύλου, πληξὼν τοῦτον ἐν τῷ ἀναισχύντῳ μετώπῳ θεοῦ παρτάξιν ὀνειδίζοντα, θανάτωσον αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ παρευθῆ. Πρὸς τὸν κραταιὸν Κομνηνόν, See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1913, col. 14–19, p. 276. For the comparison between

- Theodore and David, see also Apokaukos (Bees), no. 71 col. 7, no. 107, col. 69; no. 107, col. 72; Papazotos, 1994, 244.
- 117 *Ponemata diaphora*, 110.447.
 - 118 Dagron, 1996, 129–138; Papazotos, 1994, 244, n. 479, pin. 35a.
 - 119 Gavrilović, 1980, 185, 189, Fig. 3.
 - 120 Radojčić, 1963, 76; Todić, 1987, 81.
 - 121 Djurić, Ćirković and Korać, 1990, 68, Fig. 47.
 - 122 Grozdanov, 1980, 75, Fig. 48–50.
 - 123 Radojčić, 1958–1959, 135.
 - 124 Stavridou-Zafraka, 1990, 126–136.
 - 125 Dagron, 1996, 124.
 - 126 Papazotos, 1994, 243–244, pin. 35b.
 - 127 Papazotos refers to the following passage: Γέγονεν ἡμέτερον ψηφηφόρημα ἐπὶ τῇ μέσῳ αὐτοῦ τὸ καὶ τοῦ Μαρτιανοῦ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ γαμβροῦ τοῦ Κρητικοῦ ἐκείνου Κωνσταντίνου ἀνακυψάσῃ ὑποθέσει. *Ponemata diaphora*, 26, 1 (p. 100). Papazotos, 1994, 92.
 - 128 Papazotos, 1994, 92.
 - 129 His synaxis was held on 15 December in his martyrion near the area of Xerolophos in Constantinople (*Synaxarium EC*, cols. 307ff).
 - 130 The island of Crete is an exception. Depictions of St Eleftherios are here encountered with greater frequency. See Spatharakis, 2001.
 - 131 As, for example, in a mosaic portrait in Hosios Loukas, Phokida (Stikas, 1970, pin. 62), in the Church of St Panteleimon at Nerezi, (Sinkević, 2000, 45), in the monastery of Archangel Michael at Thari (Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2006, 33, 37, 40–42, 44–46, pin. 2; in the Virgin's church at Studenica (Babić, Korać and Ćirković, 1986, 65, 76), in the Ag. Georgios church at Episkopi in Mani, in the church of Ag. Strategos at Epano Mpoularii in the same region (Drandakis, 1995, 178–179, Fig. 29, 180.396, 430, pin. 101), etc.
 - 132 See the Menaion for December 15: Τῶν ἐπιτόκων γυναιῶν Πάτερ κηδόμενος, ἐλευθερίαν δίδως, τῷ Ναῶ σου φοιτῶσαις, εὐπλοῖαν δὲ πάλιν ἄλλοις θερμῶς, ἐξαιτοῦσιν ἐπέδωκας, καὶ τοῖς νοσοῦσιν ὑγίαν σὺ χορηγεῖς, διαλάμπων ἐν τοῖς θαύμασι. Undoubtedly this is the reason why St Eleftherios is depicted together with the holy physicians Panteleimon, Kosmas and Damian in the church of Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra in Arta. See cat. n. III, and Giannoulis, 2010, 194, pin. 36.
 - 133 Gerstel, 1999, 95.
 - 134 Papazotos, 1994, 243–244.
 - 135 Skiadaresis, 2016, Figs. 273 and 274.
 - 136 Papamastorakis, 1998, 214, 215, Fig. 4.
 - 137 Gerstel, 2001, 269–280, 271.
 - 138 Kalopissi-Verti, 2007, 15–17; Gerstel and Kappas, 2018, 177–179.
 - 139 Papazotos, 1994, 245.
 - 140 I thank G. Fousteris for providing me with this information.
 - 141 Rydén, 1974, 201–214.
 - 142 Djurić, 1979, 217; Mouriki, 1980–1981, 105–106, Figs. 50–53; Tsigaridas, 1986, 153–156.
 - 143 Djurić, 1979, 217.
 - 144 Coumbaraki-Pansélinou, 1976.
 - 145 See cat. n. XIII
 - 146 Drandakis, 1977–1979, 38,
 - 147 In Mileševa there are three different tendencies in both the creation of forms and the iconographic types. The representations with which the scenes from Veria are related are the following: Descent from the Cross, Benediction of the Apostles, Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and the figures in the medals in the arches above the templon. Radojčić, 1963, IX, X, XX–XXVII

- 148 Kissas, 1987b, 47–48.
- 149 Ferjančić and Maksimović, 1998, 13–25.
- 150 According to written sources, the archbishop of Serbia St Sava participated in the production of works of art. He ordered icons, works of miniature art, and brought with him artists from places he visited in the East. See Marković, 2009. For the involvement of St Sava in the decoration of Mileševa, see Todić, 1987, 55–68.
- 151 It is assumed that the wedding took place between 1219 and 1220; Barišić, 1978, 257–269.
- 152 Djurić, 1979, 219.
- 153 Subotić and Maksimović, 2012, 97–109.
- 154 Cvetković, 2003, 297–311; Todić, 2011, 55–68.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 Djurić points out some similarities with the Rotunda mosaics in Thessaloniki. Djurić, 1996, 219.
- 157 For a more detailed discussion, see Miljković, 2008, and Marković, 2009.
- 158 On many similarities between Mileševa and Žiža, see Todić, 1987.
- 159 Foss, 1979, 261–296.
- 160 Constantinopolitan artists came to Thessaloniki and the surrounding regions even before 1204. They spread new styles in art. An example is the prophets from Vato-pedi. See Toutos and Fousteris, 2010, 113, 123, 1266; Tsigaridas, 1996a, 237, 259, Figs. 195, 196, 217. For dating to the last decade of the twelfth century, see Miljković, 2008, 42–66, especially for the katholikon and the frescoes, 46–55.

3 Catastrophe and the Revival of Epirus

Art and Political Ideology after the Battle at Klokotnitsa 1230

3.1. Survival and Demise of the Empire of Thessaloniki

Around 1215, Manuel Doukas participated in a military campaign with his brother Theodore Komnenos Doukas. After his proclamation and coronation, Theodore bestowed the title of despot on his brothers Manuel and Constantine.¹ Once Manuel solidified his hold on Thessaloniki after 1230, he considered himself the heir to the Byzantine throne, introducing the ceremony of the Constantinopolitan court, even using red ink to sign his decrees in an imperial manner.² Manuel first recognised John III Vatatzes (1222–1254) as the only Byzantine emperor, and the church of Epirus subjected itself to the Patriarchate of Nicaea, but at the end of 1234 or at the latest in 1235, he proclaimed himself emperor of Thessaloniki.³

His wish to continue the glorious reign of his predecessors from the Komnenos Doukas family can be seen in his coinage.⁴ Manuel issued a trachy from the Thessaloniki mint, very similar to those that belonged to his brother Theodore. The obverse depicts the standing Manuel, dressed as emperor and holding a cruciform sceptre and *anexikakia*, being crowned by Christ. The bust of St Demetrios in military garb, holding a spear and hilt of a sword with inscription O/ΑΓ/ΙΟ/С on the left, and Δ/ΗΜ/ΗΤ/ΡΙ/Ο on the right is presented on the reverse.⁵ On another silver coin, Manuel is depicted as emperor being crowned by the Virgin Mary (Fig. 12). The reverse presents the bust of Christ raising his right hand in benediction and holding the book of the gospels.⁶ Manuel's coins with the theme of imperial coronation confirm his imperial claims to Thessaloniki.⁷

Until the end of his reign, Manuel continued to mint various coins on his own following the patterns of those previously minted by his brother Theodore. One of them presents on the obverse Manuel as enthroned emperor with St Demetrios holding a model of the city of Thessaloniki.⁸ Manuel is also represented as receiving the patriarchal cross on orb from St Demetrios.⁹ On different three coins Manuel is depicted with the archangel Michael holding a long, sheathed sword (Fig. 12b), while on others Michael holds labarum.¹⁰ All these coins send a clear visual message: Jesus and Mary bless Manuel to rule over the city of Thessaloniki, with the protection of St Demetrios and Archangel Michael.

Manuel also introduced innovations in the iconography of Epirote coinage. He issued one bronze coin featuring himself as emperor together with the first



Fig. 12a and b Aspron trachy of Manuel Komnenos Doukas, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC

(photo: ©Dumbarton Oaks, Collection of Coins and Seals, Washington, DC)

Christian emperor, Constantine the Great. The obverse shows Manuel standing on the left side, holding a palm frond, and Constantine on the right with a patriarchal cross on a long shaft with a three-stepped base between them. The half-length bust of Archangel Michael is on the reverse.¹¹ Another coin depicts Manuel being crowned by Constantine on the obverse and a bust of Christ on the reverse.¹² By issuing coins with the image of Constantine, Manuel apparently intended to stress his own legitimacy and promote himself as a Christian ruler and successor of the first Christian emperor.

According to Akropolites, Manuel Komnenos Doukas seems to have ruled independently of John Asen.¹³ Manuel was trying to keep his independence both

from Nicaea and the Bulgarian tsar in different ways, even asking for protection for his Kingdom of Thessaloniki from Pope Gregory IX.¹⁴

There is no preserved written or artistic evidence about Manuel's patronage in Thessaloniki. As I have previously suggested, however, the fragmentarily preserved fresco decoration in the basilica of the Theotokos the Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki could be related to the brief period of his rule.¹⁵ The decoration, preserved on the northern wall of the southern aisle, above the arcade, consists of a series of figures of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, depicted alternately as standing or *en buste*, in medallions (Fig. XX-1 and Fig. XX-2).¹⁶ Of these figures, 18 are extant. Scholars typically date the frescoes in the church of the Acheiropoietos to the period of Theodore's short rule over Thessaloniki.¹⁷ Yet there is no direct evidence, either historical or stylistic, to support this chronology. It is possible that the basilica was decorated with the frescoes of the Forty Martyrs after 1230, i.e., after the Battle of Klokotnitsa, in memory of the soldiers who had died in this battle. One should recall in this regard that the catastrophe at Klokotnitsa took place on 9 March, which is, significantly, the feast day of the Forty Martyrs. Flanking the solemn file of the Sebastean saints in the southern aisle of the Acheiropoietos—all depicted as martyrs, with crosses in their hands—are two large candlesticks, each with a lit candle (Fig. XX-3). In Byzantine art, this iconographic motif sometimes appears in funerary contexts, e.g. in the northwestern chapel of Hosios Loukas, where two candlesticks are part of a decidedly funerary programme.¹⁸ Here, it may allude to the tragic death that the Epirote army met at Klokotnitsa on the Forty Martyrs' feast day.

These few extant wall paintings from the Acheiropoietos church are the best proof of the quality of art in Thessaloniki at that time. The saints are dressed as martyrs and were undoubtedly inspired by the warriors Sts Demetrios and George from the mosaics in the church of Ag. Demetrios in the same city. The frescoes remain close to the artistic traits of the twelfth century, while the volume of the body, as well as the use of colours, show the new tendencies very characteristic of Serbian monuments dated to the beginning of the thirteenth century. For instance, the figures of the Forty Martyrs are closely related to the wall paintings of Mileševa, Žiča, and Sts Apostles in Peć.¹⁹ For instance, the representations of Sts Gaios and Leontios have many similarities with the fresco of apostle Luke from Žiča,²⁰ and Sts Floros and Lauros with the equivalent figures from Sts Apostles in Peć.²¹ Similarities can also be seen with the decoration of the Episkopi in Eurytania²² and Ag. Ioannis at Kerami, Naxos.²³

If we accept the aforementioned historical interpretation supported by stylistic features of the frescoes with the figures of the Forty Martyrs in the Acheiropoietos, then there is a distinct possibility that they could have been executed during the reign of Manuel Komnenos Doukas, despot and emperor of Thessaloniki (r. 1230–1237).

In 1237, the situation suddenly changed in Thessaloniki as Theodore Komnenos Doukas re-entered the stage there. The Bulgarian king Ivan Asen had fallen in love with Theodore's daughter Irene and married her.²⁴ As a consequence of this event, Theodore was released from captivity. He went immediately to

Thessaloniki, where he still had supporters. Because of his blindness, he declined to wear the crown himself but instead appointed his son John Komnenos Doukas as emperor. Manuel Doukas was sent to Asia Minor. Despite forging an alliance with John III Vatatzes²⁵ and his return to Thessaly, where he established himself as a ruler, Manuel was unable to effectively challenge Theodore and John again. An agreement was reached between Theodore, Manuel, and their brother the despot Constantine so that each of them ruled his own area: John ruled Thessaloniki and its surroundings; Theodore gained Edessa, Arnissa, and Staridola; Manuel and Constantine ruled Thessaly; and Michael II reigned over Epirus. In addition, they reached an agreement with the Latins of the Peloponnese and the Venetians, who ruled Euboea, so that the situation was stable.²⁶



Fig. 13a and b Aspron trachy of John I Komnenos Doukas, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC
(photo: © Dumbarton Oaks, Collection of Coins and Seals, Washington, DC)

John Komnenos Doukas ruled as emperor for five years, until 1242, when Thessaloniki was captured by John III Vatatzes (1222–1254) of Nicaea. Since Vatatzes needed to return to Asia Minor and deal with a Seljuk invasion, he left John Komnenos Doukas to rule in Thessaloniki, this time with the title of despot.²⁷

John Komnenos Doukas, probably on advice from his father Theodore, continued the tradition of issuing various coins promoting his power and legitimacy. During his seven-year rule, John struck 53 copper issues consisting of 27 different coin types.²⁸

These coins include the already well-known iconography of the Komnenos Doukas family depicting John as emperor with St Demetrios (Fig. 13), Jesus, the Virgin, or St Michael.²⁹ Among them, there are also some new iconographies unique for Epirote coinage: Emperor John is depicted alone with the labarum and the akakia with two big wings.³⁰ The ‘winged emperor’ is an unknown theme for Byzantine coinage before John Komnenos Doukas. On another of John’s coins from the Thessaloniki mint, the obverse presents him alone as emperor holding a sceptre and the vexillum, while on the reverse there is a representation of wings.³¹ This iconography is unique also in Byzantine coinage but was very common in western Europe, as is also the case with the triple-towered castle introduced on Theodore Komnenos Doukas’s coins.³²

The rulers of Thessaloniki from the Komnenos Doukas family bore the imperial title until 1242 when they were forced to recognise the suzerainty of the rival Empire of Nicaea. The city was annexed by Nicaea in 1246.

3.2. Artistic Patronage During the Reign of Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1230–1266/1268) and His Wife Theodora

After the Battle of Klokotnitsa, Michael II Komnenos Doukas returned from exile in the Peloponnese, where he was sent by his brother Theodore in 1215. Michael inherited Theodore’s ambition in Epirus. With the support of the local population, he established himself very quickly in Arta and started to rule Epirus. Michael II Komnenos Doukas married Theodora Petraliphaina from an important Epirote noble family and received additional support from the local high aristocracy as well.³³ Even though Michael and his wife Theodora established good relation with Nicaea and the Nicaean patriarch, Germanos II, who visited Epirus in 1238, Michael kept believing that he had at least as much a claim on the imperial status as Theodore did and, later, even thought of himself as a legitimate rival for the Constantinopolitan throne of his ancestors. This ambition could be seen in the coinage that Michael II issued in Arta, in the same way as in the previous generation of the Komnenos Doukas family. He continued to apply the same iconography as his ancestors, which consisted of representing himself as emperor crowned by the Virgin Mary, St Demetrios, or Christ.³⁴ Not only on coinage but also on his seals, dated to 1236 and 1237, Michael II appears crowned and in full imperial regalia, with the orb and sceptre in his hands.³⁵

In 1242, the emperor of Nicaea, John III Vatatzes, launched a campaign against Thessaloniki, forcing Michael II to relinquish the imperial title. After military failures, Michael II recognised John as emperor and, in return, John recognised him as despot. Michael's eldest son Nikephoros married John Vatatzes' granddaughter Maria. Despite the dynastic marriage between the families and close relation with Nicaea, Michael II continued to be at odds with the Empire of Nicaea, with which he was in constant military conflict. Furthermore, Michael II was much influenced by his brother Theodore, who established himself in Voden. As Theodore with his son John failed to preserve Thessaloniki, he joined Michael and they together attacked Thessaloniki in 1251. Obviously, Theodore's ambitious idea of claiming the Byzantine throne in Constantinople was still alive. Michael and Theodore captured some territories, which included Prilep and Veles, but were unsuccessful with Thessaloniki. Very soon, Michael was forced to subjugate himself to John Vatatzes who insisted that Theodore be handed over to him, after which he sent him as a prisoner to Asia Minor where he died shortly after in ca. 1253.

However, Nicaea was not the only enemy that the Epirotes had; there were also the Latins. Around 1258, Michael II Komnenos Doukas forged an alliance with western leaders in order to protect Epirus' independence against threats that came from both the neighbouring Latin states and Nicaea. This web of alliances included also dynastic marriages. In 1258, Michael gave his daughter Helena to Manfred of Hohenstaufen, king of Sicily,³⁶ and the other daughter, Anna, to the prince of Achaia, William II Villehardouin.³⁷ Different motives lay behind the formation of these Latin-Epirote alliances. First, Manfred had occupied Epirus' territories surrounding Dyrrachium and Avlona sometime before 1258. Consequently, the kingdom of Sicily became a difficult enemy threatening the whole of Epirus. To alleviate this threat, Michael decided to legitimise Manfred's conquests of Epirote lands by marrying him to Helena, even adding additional territories to her dowry to cement the alliance.³⁸ Michael also wanted to confirm Manfred's aid as a bulwark against Nicaea, as he was planning to capture Thessaloniki and Nicaea and be proclaimed the *emperor of the Romans*. For these ambitious plans, it was necessary to obtain more military aid, which Michael could only find in Achaia's famous Frankish knighthood; consequently, he made a treaty with them. Although both of these Latin rulers were antagonistic to Epirus, they saw their own interests in this alliance.³⁹

After the recapture of Veria in 1257 and after Michael's new alliances with the Latins in 1258, he was directly threatening Thessaloniki. His efforts, however, ended with his defeat at the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259. With the help of Manfred, Michael kept his authority only in Arta and Ioannina.

Michael Komnenos Doukas II's reign was marked by an unprecedented efflorescence of artistic production in Epirus. Unlike previous rulers, the patronage of Michael and his wife Theodora can be traced with greater certainty thanks to the epigraphic and other textual sources discussed in the first chapter.⁴⁰ As we have seen, Michael II sponsored three churches: Kato Panagia in Arta, the church of the Metamorphosi near Galaxeidi, and the Pantanassa monastery near Philippiada. Most likely, Michael's patronage could be also related to the first

church construction of the Parigoritissa in Arta.⁴¹ Michael's patronage activities continued to be an imitation of the Constantinopolitan tradition, and he continued to dedicate the newly constructed churches to the Virgin Mary. Two of these shrines—namely, the Pantanassa and Parigoritissa—obviously have the two Constantinopolitan churches of the same name as archetypes.

Michael's wife Theodora is associated with the church of Ag. Theodora (previously Ag. Georgios) and the cave church of Ag. Andreas in Chalkiopoulos, Aitolokarnania. The tombs and inscriptions from the Vlacherna monastery in Arta indicate that members of the Komnenos Doukas and Petraliphas families continued to support this church during Michael II's reign when the church was renovated and decorated.

Unfortunately, most of the decoration in the aforementioned churches, which could be related to the patronage of the ruling Komnenos Doukas family, has been lost. The only church with layers of paintings that can be dated with certainty to the 1231–1268 period and attributed to the sponsorship of Michael II Komnenos Doukas is the Kato Panagia church in Arta (Fig. IV.Fig. IV. 1-3.). In 2004, when excavation works began in the Kato Panagia, the already known frescoes from the first phase were re-examined, while additional sections of the fresco decoration in the main church from the same phase were discovered.⁴² Byzantine frescoes cover all the surfaces of the diakonikon (Fig. IV-2).⁴³ There are few preserved sections in the prothesis, the sanctuary, and at the bottom of the walls in the nave (Fig. IV-2). The frescoes sustained much damage and were covered by later painting in some areas. The frescoes conservation work was completed with extensive aesthetic restoration of the entire painted surface, thus rendering any new stylistic observations and comparisons insecure.

The frescoes are of good quality, though not to such an extent as suggested by other scholars.⁴⁴ The scenes are flat and shallow, although they are enriched with complex architectural buildings with much detail. Canopies in the representations of Jesus teaching in the temple and the prophet Zechariah rejecting the gifts of the righteous are rendered without perspective, as are the buildings (Fig. IV-3). The depicted buildings recall the frescoes of the Vlacherna monastery in Arta, as well as that of Ag. Theodora.

What has been overlooked by previous research is that the inscription accompanying the scene of Jesus teaching in the sanctuary is metric, consisting of two 12-syllable verses: EN TO IEPO ΔΙΔΑΣΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΕΓΧΩΝ/ΤΟΥΣ ΑΠΙΘΕΙΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΙΣ (Fig. IV-3).⁴⁵ This confirms the continuation of the artistic tradition involving artists with significant theological and literary insights, which we found in the first decades of the thirteenth century.

According to the post-Byzantine Greek chronicle, Χρονικὸν τοῦ Γαλαξειδίου, the patron of the church of the Metamorphosi near Galaxeidi was Michael II Doukas. The church can probably be dated to ca 1246/1247 (Fig. XI).⁴⁶ This mid-thirteenth-century date aligns well with the architectural characteristics of the building. The church was built by the architect master-builder Carouli, an Italian master craftsman.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the architectural form of this church is purely Byzantine.⁴⁸

The walls of the church were fully covered with paintings, of which today only fragments survive. Initially, in the sanctuary, there was the Deisis, which consisted of Christ the Pantokrator, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist. It is the only church in Epirus, in which the Deisis is placed in the semi-dome of the apse. In others, the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child is illustrated. The Deisis in the conch of the apse is rare in mainland Balkans. It appears, however, in churches in Puglia,⁴⁹ the southern Peloponnese,⁵⁰ as well as in Aegean islands, e.g., on Naxos,⁵¹ Rhodes,⁵² Chios, Crete. The choice of the Deisis has been related to the iconography of the East, as evidenced by the surviving examples from Georgia, Asia Minor, and the islands whose art was under the influence of the eastern provinces. Two more unidentified female saints with brown, red, and light-green clothes are preserved in the church but painted on a smaller scale.

As P. Vokotopoulos has argued, stylistic elements also support the middle of the thirteenth-century dating of this church. The painter follows the linear style that characterises many thirteenth-century provincial monuments, representing a provincial version of the monumental plastic style common during the same period. Vokotopoulos believes that the frescoes could be associated with the few surviving figures in the Hagia Sophia of Nicaea⁵³ or with Sts Anargyroi and St Theodote in the Episkopi of Evrytania.⁵⁴

Sometime around the middle of the thirteenth century, Michael II Doukas's wife Theodora founded a monastery in Arta dedicated to St George.⁵⁵ After the death of her husband, Theodora became a nun, spending the last years of her life in this monastery. Only the church of Ag. Theodora (Fig. I-1.) and the arched gateway of this complex are extant today. This church is an important pilgrimage centre, as St Theodora was buried here, and her relics are kept and exhibited for worship.⁵⁶ St Theodora is also the patron saint of the city of Arta.⁵⁷ Previous scholars, probably influenced by the local tradition, have misidentified the fresco occupying the conch of the niche of the diakonikon as that of St Theodora (Fig. I-3).⁵⁸ However, the facial and hair characteristics, as well as the costume of the depicted saint, match exactly with representations of St George.⁵⁹

The church of Ag. Theodora is a three-aisled basilica, which was built on the ruins of an older middle Byzantine structure that could be dated to the end of the twelfth century. At some point after the third decade of the thirteenth century, the nave and sanctuary were decorated with frescoes. Parts of these are preserved only in the diakonikon, the sanctuary, and the lowest register of the nave (Fig. I-2b).

The most interesting among these is the unusual decorative theme of a struggle between a knight on horseback with a centaur-archer depicted in the decorative band of the northern wall, under the no longer existing Deisis scene (Fig. 14).

The scene depicts an archer wearing metallic scaled-mail body armour mounted on a white horse pursuing a centaur. This scene could be interpreted as a symbolic theme representing the pursuit of evil by a soldier because in Christian mythology centaurs are often considered as servants of evil and injustice. This is a known decorative element found, for example, on a bronze door in Novgorod, on the western window drum in Studenica, and especially in western art.⁶⁰ The soldier



Fig. 14 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, Knight on horseback, fighting a centaur-archer, nave, lower zone of the north wall

(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

wears military armour. The soldier's body and armour are also covered with a purple military tunic. The costume of the soldier in this representation has elements that are reminiscent of the Palaiologan period, but it also has certain similarities with the costume of the crusaders. This costume has many similarities with that of the soldier from the mocking scene in the Vlacherna monastery.⁶¹

Western influences, although fairly subtle, can be observed in wall decoration of Epirote churches. Representations of centaurs in the church of Ag. Theodora in Arta were probably influenced by Frankish culture, as in the Peloponnese, with similar themes found on sculpture, wall paintings, and ceramic wares.⁶² The inclusion of a previously unknown theme into the southern Peloponnesian Byzantine art reveals the penetration of western influences in the region after the momentous events following the Fourth Crusade and the establishment of the Principality of Achaia (Morea), one of the three vassal states of the Latin Empire. Close diplomatic relations between Michael II of Epirus and William II Villehardouin would have been one of the possible artistic paths for the insertion of similar themes into the art of Epirus.

Another notable example of the crusader influence in Byzantine art can be seen in the representation of the Mockery of Christ in the church of Ag. Ioannis Theologos in Efpalio (Aitolia), in which Jews are dressed according to western medieval fashion (Fig. XII-2).⁶³ Moreover, in representations of military costumes and equipment, as, for instance, in the depiction of soldiers from the scene of the Marys at the Tomb in the Church of St George at Dhivrë, Sarandë (Albania)⁶⁴ and in the Mockery of Christ from the Vlacherna monastery in Arta.⁶⁵

In terms of style and iconography, western influences from southern Italy, as, for example, at Santa Cristina at Carpignano,⁶⁶ Santa Maria delle Cerrate,⁶⁷ and St Pietro in Otranto,⁶⁸ can be observed in the wall paintings of several churches from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, e.g., Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, Metamorphosi Sotiros at Plakoti, and Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias. Particularly interesting is the choice to represent Saint Leon of Catania, who appears only in two churches in Epirus: the Metamorphosi Sotiros at Plakoti⁶⁹ and the Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias.⁷⁰ This saint is often depicted in churches on Corfu and in the southern Peloponnese, the regions with intensive commercial and political contacts with southern Italy.⁷¹

Another unusual iconographic theme is the vision of St Eustathios Plakida⁷² in the Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra.⁷³ The cult of St Eustathios appears in the West and more specifically in Italy during the migration of the Greek-Syrians in the sixth and seventh centuries following the Persian and Araba invasions but also later during the iconoclastic persecutions.⁷⁴ In the eighth century in Rome, a church was dedicated to the deacon St Eustathios. The oldest depictions of the vision, however, come from the twelfth century Puglia, namely from the province of Taranto, and they are found in the crypt of the Holy Hermits in Palagianello.⁷⁵ There is another example from the same area in the crypt of St Onoufrios, which dates to the end of the thirteenth century. In the St Onoufrios, the inscription Ω ΠΛΑΚΙΔΑ ΤΗ ΜΕ ΔΙΩΚΗΣ and the name of St Eustathios are preserved.⁷⁶

In the churches of the Metamorphosi Sotiros at Plakoti and the Taxiarches in Kostaniani, deacon Euplos is also represented. He was originally from Catana in Sicily where he was often depicted.⁷⁷

The land registry from Thebes⁷⁸ testifies to the presence of families from Italy in central Greece since the beginning of the eleventh century and, following that, documents from Chomatenos and Apokaukos.⁷⁹ These families usually lived in the western parts of the Epirote state, i.e., in places that had close relations with Italy, such as Nafpaktos, Corfu, and Vella. There were, of course, exceptions, such as that of the Kounali family, who lived in Veria. On the other hand, the diachronically important presence of the Greek element in Italy and Sicily continued to exert significant influence throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁸⁰

It is worth mentioning that in Epirus, the veneration of St Nicholas was promoted, especially in areas where families from southern Italy lived. This was certainly the result of influences from the Apulian shrines of St Nicholas at Bari. Thus, for example, developed painted cycles of the life of St Nicholas are preserved in Ag. Ioannis Theologos in Efpalio near Nafplio,⁸¹ in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Episkopi,⁸² as well as in the church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias.⁸³ The painted cycle of this saint is well developed in the church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, and it consists of 11 scenes, of which the one representing St Nicholas saving a ship in a storm is the best preserved. The scene is located in a particularly prominent place on the northern wall of the narthex's upper zone (Fig. VII-2a; n.130). The saint is shown in a standing position and is placed closer to the middle of the ship. His right hand is raised towards the sky, and in his left, he holds a scroll. Two sailors are shown in the sitting position in the right section of the boat. They are absent panic, and both of them join the saint's prayer

with their outstretched and raised palms.⁸⁴ This scene probably owes its prominent position to frequent maritime voyages between the principal ports in Epirus and Apulia and the experiences originating therein. A similar storm in 1231 blew away the metropolitan Bardanes' ship from his Corfu-Brindisi route, necessitating his landing in Otranto instead.⁸⁵ The respect for the cult of St Nicholas is also evidenced by an extremely unusual supernaturally sized representation of the saint *en buste* in the lower zone of the western pillar's northern side in the Taxiarches in Kostaniani (Fig. XXIII-2; n.103).

Artistic interactions between Epirus and southern Italy during the thirteenth century have been already addressed by Safran.⁸⁶ The relationship of Epirotes with their neighbours have been attested since the second decade of the thirteenth century, when George Bardanes, the metropolitan of Corfu, maintained a friendship with Nektarios, the abbot of the monastery St. Nicholas at Casole, close to Otranto. Bardanes and Nektarios exchanged letters for over two decades.⁸⁷ One of their letters was sent in 1225 by Bardanes to Nektarios via a painter who also brought parchment with him to copy Nektarios's dialogues against the Latins.⁸⁸ There is no other evidence about painter's activities in Epirus or southern Italy, but this provides indications for the existence of certain artistic interactions. Furthermore, in early 1232, when Bardanes was sent by Manuel Doukas on a diplomatic mission to Frederick II (1220–1250) and Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241), he spent a month at the monastery in Casole with his friend, Abbot Nektarios.⁸⁹

Annemarie Weyl Carr has proposed recently that the bilateral vita icon of a sculptured St George with a female donor (Fig. 15a), today in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens (inv. no. BM 1108), could be related to Epirotes and their western alliances. More specifically, the icon could be related to the patronage of Theodora in Arta and could have been produced as a titular icon for her convent church of Ag. Georgios (later Ag. Theodora) in Arta.⁹⁰ It depicts St George in the centre turned towards his left with hands lifted in prayer. He is looking up to Christ in the upper-right corner. Painted scenes from his life are in the frame of the icon. On the ground at the left, a small female donor kneels in proskynesis while wearing long dark robes.

Two female saints are depicted on the reverse (15b). One wears a red maphorion and the other an imperial dress, both turned inward in the profile orant pose, with hands raised to a figure of Christ above them who is blessing each of them in equal measure by extending both his arms from the arc of heaven.

Their original names are not preserved, though the saint in maphorion has been identified, based on the later inscription, as St Marina and the other one as St Irena. A.W. Carr has proposed a new identification of these saints as Anna and Helena⁹¹ and tried to connect the icon with the contemporary historical situation in Epirus. Helena and Anna were daughters of Theodora and Michael II Komnenos Doukas, both married to their fathers' Latin allies, as discussed earlier. The icon presents various western elements, such as a crusader image of the warrior saint as the coat of arms on the saint's shield. This bilateral icon with the representation of St George and the scenes from his vita could best be placed as a titular icon of Theodora's convent. As other sources are unavailable, and we cannot provide a



Fig. 15a Icon of St George with female donor, obverse, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (inv. no. BM 1108)

Source: (©Byzantine and Christian Museum—Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports)

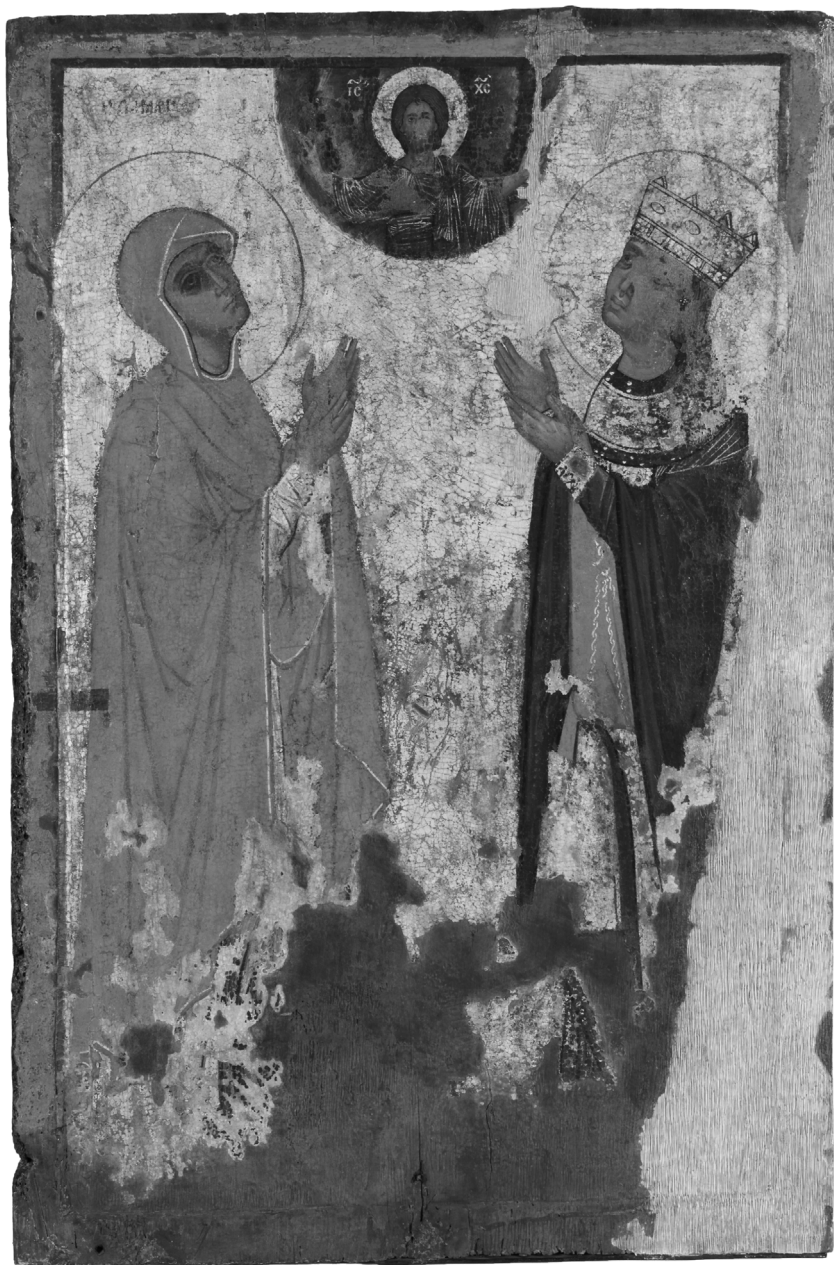


Fig. 15b Icon of two female saints, reverse, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (inv. no. BM 1108)

Source: (©Byzantine and Christian Museum—Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports)

conclusive identification of the two female saints on the reverse side, the question remains open for further research.

It is unknown if Theodora was the patron of this icon, but according to the *synaxarion* life of St Andrew and the preserved inscriptions, she was responsible for the completion of the cave church of Ag. Andreas the Hermit near the village of Chalkiopoulos in Aitoloakarnania around 1282/1283.⁹² According to tradition, *basilissa* Theodora was a nun at the time and took care of the construction and decoration of the saint's cave hermitage.⁹³ Frescoes there are preserved only in the sanctuary. In the conch, a bust of the Virgin Mary in the type of *Platytera* is depicted with her hands open in prayer (Fig. XIX). The medal with Christ Emmanuel lies on her chest. This is an iconographic type of Virgin Mary very common in the area, as can be seen in examples from Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos (first phase), Preventza, and Ag. Demetrios Katsouris. Below the Virgin Mary are four concelebrating hierarchs. The hierarchs hold open scrolls with liturgical prayers. On the wall south of the apse in sanctuary another hierarch, Epiphanius of Cyprus is depicted.

The wall paintings are of good quality with a strong provincial character, mainly in the rendering of the portraits' facial features. The stylised details in the headdresses and the beards, as in the case of Sts Andrew and Basil, recall the Komnenian tradition (Fig. XIX). However, the general execution of the faces suggests contact with contemporary artistic currents of the Palaiologan painting. In particular, the face of Christ Emmanuel, which is round and fleshy, refers to corresponding forms from Thessaloniki workshops at around 1300.

There is another element that proves that the ensemble of wall paintings from Chalkiopoulos is associated with donors or artists who had profound theological and literary education. The evidence can be found in the second inscription, which separates the Virgin Mary from the hierarchs, which includes a poem attributed to Michael Psellos.⁹⁴

As Sotiris Kissas has noticed, it is noteworthy that a Psellos' poem with a symbolic content ended up in the conch of the sanctuary of an insignificant church, inside a cave in Aitoloacarnania.⁹⁵ The only other place where verses of this great Byzantine scholar have survived in monumental art is Kurbinovo.⁹⁶

During Michael's reign, several other important churches were built, renovated, or decorated, which also reflected contemporaneous historical events in Epirus. Among them was the Panagia tou Bryoni, a three-aisled domed basilica located near the village of Neochoraki (Fig. 5).⁹⁷ According to the preserved inscription, this church was built around 1232, when the patriarch of Constantinople, Germanos II, visited Arta and succeeded in restoring Epirus to the jurisdiction of the patriarchate. According to official documents, the church of the archangel in the theme of Nikopolis was consecrated in 1238 by Patriarch Germanos II during his visit to Epirus.⁹⁸ The successor to John Apokaukos at Nafaktos was Niketas Choniates, who was appointed from Nicaea. Patriarch Germanos visited Arta in person to establish his authority. This visit was certainly important for Michael II since in this way he secured the recognition by the highest ecclesiastical authority, the patriarch of Constantinople. Despite the growing political differences between

Epirus and Nicaea, the Epirote clergy never again questioned the supremacy of the patriarch of Nicaea.

The church the Panagia tou Bryoni has a distinct place in Epirote architecture since it is considered the only precisely dated church. The church is the product of a local workshop, and it is likely that the monument was not immediately decorated with wall paintings.⁹⁹

The Vlacherna continues as an important monastery in Epirus. The issue of its dating, as well as the identification of the sarcophagi, has already been addressed in previous chapters. Other than the inscriptions on the sarcophagi, there is no written evidence confirming that the church was linked with a donation from the Petralifas and Komnenos Doukas families. The fresco decoration is partially preserved in the main church and to a somewhat greater extent in the narthex, which was constructed during two different periods, probably in the time of Nikephoros. The recently edited volume by V. Papadopoulou and the monograph by Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou provide a detailed analysis of the wall paintings.¹⁰⁰

Acheimastou-Potamianou, based on literary sources, concludes that the works in the monastery, i.e., the construction of the three-aisled dome basilica, did not occur during the time of Theodore Doukas since the time between 1227 and 1230 was too short to complete such extensive works.¹⁰¹ It is not excluded, however, that the conversion of the church began after 1230, while the reason for its construction may have been partial destruction of the church by the earthquake of 1231, as suggested by P. Fountas.¹⁰²

Regarding the execution of the monumental decoration, Acheimastou-Potamianou proposes its dating to the middle of the thirteenth century. If we take into account the importance of this monastery, however, then it does not seem very convincing to assume that the work on its decoration began so late. A document from 1227 shows that nuns had already settled in the monastery (no later than 1224), which could mean that this event was accompanied by some works.¹⁰³ For this reason, the decoration of the church may have begun in the third decade of the thirteenth century, and it continued during the renovation of the church, after the damage caused by an earthquake that occurred after 1231.

If the proposal by P. Fountas that the alterations of the church were due to destruction by the 1231 earthquake is correct, then the wall paintings of the main church must be placed in the period between 1230 and 1250. The iconographic and stylistic elements recall both the artistic trends that are taking shape in Thessaloniki and the general artistic current that is recognised in the mural ensembles of Serbia, Patmos, Bulgaria, and Sinai (Fig. V-3). Art in the latter areas, including some others (e.g., in Crete, Rhodes, and other Aegean islands), is connected by a common style, and this art is characterised in scholarship as the 'art of Nicaea'. It is essentially the art of Constantinople, which was the centre of the main artistic expression, from which painters were then dispersed to various areas, where new workshops were created. There is no doubt that there was a mass exodus of artists from Constantinople to Nicaea after 1204, as the needs of the new capital had to be served. Important art workshops must also have been established there, which fuelled the artistic production in both neighbouring and some more remote areas,

such as Serbia¹⁰⁴ and Sinai. However, a number of painters remained in Constantinople, continuing its previous artistic tradition, which evolved with a new style and advanced iconography. The high quality of paintings in the Vlacherna monastery, with its use of precious materials (lapis lazuli and, sporadically, gold), show that the workshops employed at the site were trained in the most advanced artistic milieu of the period.

The quality of the sculpture needs to be mentioned too. The Vlacherna monastery's katholikon was decorated with many exquisite pieces of sculpture, such as the marble iconostasis, the capitals, and the relief slabs. Many of them are now located in the small Museum in Parigoritissa.¹⁰⁵ Among them, there are some unique examples of a marble plaque (0.27 x 0.27 x 0.006m) which represents a warrior (Fig. 7). According to A. Orlando, the plaque probably depicts a western knight.¹⁰⁶ G. Velenis, on the other hand, suggests that this figure could represent one of the two twins buried in the temple of Vlacherna and mentioned in the inscription.¹⁰⁷

3.3. The Church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias and Its Context

Another church worth special attention is the Church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias located in the village of Kirkizates, several kilometres away from Arta (Fig. VII-1). In 1936, Anastasios Orlandos dated the wall decoration of this church to the beginning of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Later scholars shifted the date to the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁹ According to the generally accepted view, this artwork should be dated to the period before 1230, i.e., when Epirus was at the height of its power.¹¹⁰ The wall paintings in this church, even though not well preserved, point to a workshop with artists who were able to execute a high-quality iconographic programme. Many of these frescoes have suffered considerable damage, as in the prothesis, the lower registers of the nave, and especially in the narthex.

The iconographic programme (Fig VII-2) of the church follows the well-known pattern common for middle Byzantine churches: the Pantokrator with prophets in the dome, the enthroned Virgin with the child Christ in the apse of sanctuary, the communion of the apostles and hierarchies in lower registers in the sanctuary, and the Christological circle in the nave, supplemented with various saints in lower and higher registers. The developed cycle of the Mother of God is depicted also in the second register on the southern wall of the prothesis and on the northern vault of the northern bay. In the narthex, the life of St Nicholas with at least 11 scenes is portrayed, as well as Isaiah's vision of the glory of God; in the lowest register, there are eight holy monks with partly preserved texts written on scrolls which were mainly taken from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the *Pratum spiritaule* of John Moschus.¹¹¹

Some representations rare for a thirteenth-century wall painting can be seen in the Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias as, for example, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, Isaiah's vision of the glory of God, and the Veneration of the Holy Cross by angels. Undoubtedly, the most noteworthy is the representation of the Veneration of the Holy Cross by angels depicted on the northern side of the diakonikon's longitudinal vault (Fig. 16a and 16b).



Fig. 16a Veneration of the Holy Cross by angels, the north side of the longitudinal vault of the diakonikon, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, Arta

(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

The composition features three angels approaching the cross in veneration and bears the inscription: Η ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΙΣΗΣ.¹¹² The first angel holds in his left hand one of the instruments of Christ's passion (the lance), while with his right hand he touches the cross. This is an almost unique representation, although a similar one is found in the northern tympanum of the transverse cross arm in the church of *Hypapante* on the slope of Mt Tsalikas, in the vicinity of the village of Sofiko, in Corinthia. In this example, two angels bow toward a cross, raising their hands in prayer.¹¹³

Representations of angels with outstretched wings flanking a cross or a triumphal wreath with the cross were common from the early Christian period in mural painting and mosaic, as well as in sculpture. In these representations, the angels carry the True Cross like a triumphal symbol that overcomes death.¹¹⁴ A representation of two angels venerating a large cross, similar to the examples from Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias in Arta, is preserved on the ampulla no. 2 from Bobbio,¹¹⁵ the chalice from the Byzantine collection in Dumbarton Oaks and dated to the sixth century,¹¹⁶ and on a silver plate from Syria, today in the State Hermitage Museum inv. no. 209 also dated to the sixth century.¹¹⁷

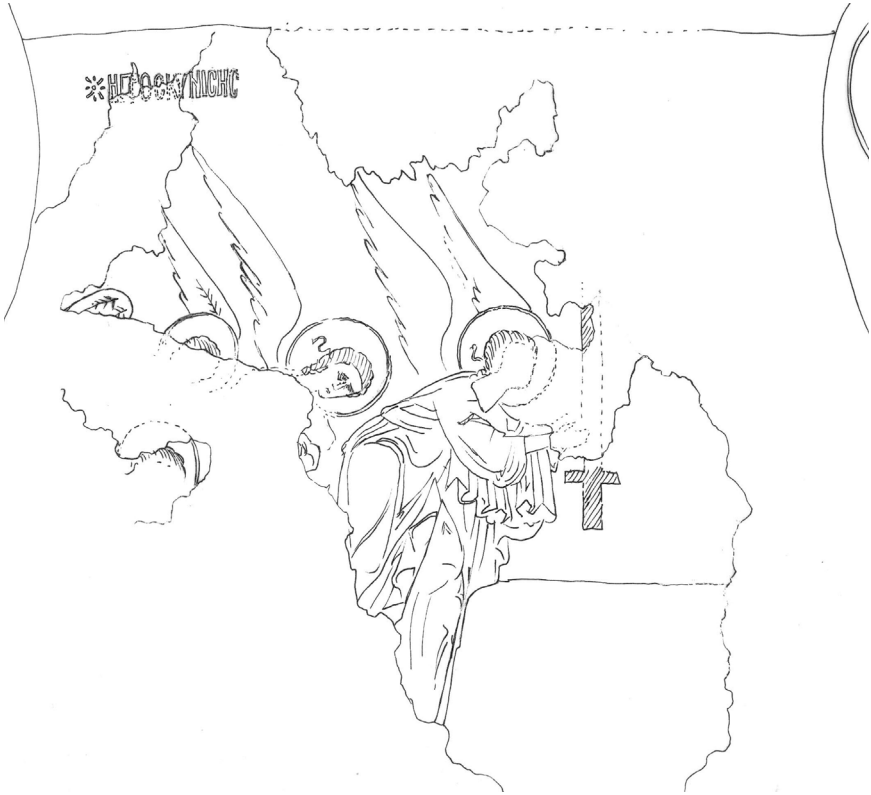


Fig. 16b Drawing of the Veneration of the Holy Cross by angels, the north side of the longitudinal vault of the diakonikon, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, Arta

(drawing: Georgios Foustieris)

Another similar depiction of this theme is preserved on the southern wall of the Ag. Neophytes' hermitage in Cyprus, where cross-shaped cavities that once contained a relic of the Cross still exist in situ. Two angels adorn the upper section of the Cross.¹¹⁸ To this may be added two more examples from the twelfth century. One is a two-sided icon from the Tretyakov Gallery with Mandylion (front side; Fig. 17) and the True Cross with angels (backside)¹¹⁹ and the second is a stone parapet from the village of Kuti in Montenegro.¹²⁰

The Veneration of the Cross by angels is a common motif, encountered in a variety of iconographic contexts. The example from Ag. Nicholas tis Rodias primarily has a Christological meaning and is an organic part of the diakonikon's iconographic programme. There, on the drum of the eastern wall, the representation of the Ancient of Days is placed between the representations of the Hypapante and the Adoration of the Cross (Fig. VII-2). This layout can be related to

the incarnation of Christ. It should be noted that the correlation of the Ancient of Days with the mystery of the incarnation is found both in the works of ecclesiastical writers and in the *akolouthia* for the Hypapante. The homily for the Nativity of Christ, attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373), says that 'the Ancient of Days became a little child'.¹²¹ A similar idea is expressed multiple times in the *akolouthia* of the Hypapante: 'The Ancient of Days, who in times past gave Moses the Law on Sinai, appears this day as a babe'.¹²² In another *sticheron* for the same feast, we read the following: 'The Ancient of Days, a young child in the flesh, was brought to the temple by His Mother the Virgin'.¹²³ The final hymn for the same feast is the following one: 'The Ancient of Days for my sake becomes a child; God the most pure receives purification, that He may confirm the reality of the human flesh which He took from the Virgin'.¹²⁴ Hence, the correlation between the prophet Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Day and Christ's incarnation features prominently in the Byzantine tradition.

The representation of the Veneration of the Cross by the winged angels could also relate to the *akolouthia* of the Hypapante and the Ancient of Days. What points to this conclusion is the fact that the third *sticheron* of the *Lity* states that 'Him whom the Ministers on high entreat (λιτανεύουσι) with trembling, Symeon has now received below in his earthly arms, and he proclaims the union of the Godhead with humankind'.¹²⁵ Note here that the word λιτανεύουσι used in this hymn also means 'pray in procession (with carrying a cross)',¹²⁶ which echoes the content of the representation under discussion, i.e., the three angels in procession. It is not impossible that the creator of the iconographic programme found in this *sticheron* the inspiration for the whole upper register of the diakonikon since the arrangement of the scenes follows the words of the hymn: the Ancient of Days is represented in the middle, on his right side, on the northern side of the longitudinal vault, angels venerate him in the procession, while the Hypapante is placed on the southern wall. The presence of the cross, which is in front of the procession and also venerated by the angels, as well as the symbol of passion—the lance—in the hand of the first angel, should be associated with this feast. Both in the description of the event of the Hypapante in the New Testament (Luke 2: 35) and in the hymnography of the feast, references are made to the Passion of Christ, which Symeon foretold to the Virgin Mary: 'And a sword shall pierce thy heart, O All-Pure Virgin, Symeon foretold to the Theotokos, when thou shalt see thy Son upon the Cross to whom we cry aloud: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou'.¹²⁷

The aforementioned inscription Η ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΙΣΗΣ could, however, also link this representation with the cultic veneration of the relics of the True Cross in Constantinople, where, much more than other relics, the Cross played an important role in the liturgical year.¹²⁸ The principal feast of the Cross was its Exaltation on September 14, which was preceded by four days of its public veneration in the Great Church.¹²⁹ In addition to the Typikon of the Great Church, detailed information on the involvement of the emperor and his court in the celebration of the feast can be found in the *Book of Ceremonies*. Such public rituals are visually represented in a number of preserved liturgical manuscripts,¹³⁰ as well as in the

wall decoration of several Byzantine churches, e.g., the Staro Nagoričino and¹³¹ Gračanica.¹³²

The victorious power of the Holy Cross, having its source in the legend surrounding Constantine the Great and the battle of the Milvian Bridge, infused the official imperial ideology through centuries.¹³³ The True Cross, regarded as the visible symbol of Christ's victory over death, became a symbol of the emperor's triumph over his enemies, and relics of the Cross were prominently featured in the imperial ceremonial.¹³⁴ Fragments of the Cross accompanied Byzantine emperors in battles to ensure victory, and hymns sung before military engagements invoked the Cross as a weapon and source of protection.¹³⁵ Furthermore, there are several recorded instances of the emperor's solemn swearing of oaths on the relics of the True Cross.¹³⁶ Patriarch Nikephoros' *Short History* relates one among the earliest such records, in which Heraklios (r. 610–641) swore on the life-giving wood that he or anyone else would not harm the children of his deceased brother Constantine III (r. 641).¹³⁷

The relics of the life-giving wood were housed in precious *staurothekes* and widely distributed all over the empire.¹³⁸ Anthony Eastmond's work provides a good narrative of the ways in which the possession of the True Cross was used by two of the successor states of Byzantium after 1204 (i.e., in Nicaea and Trebizond) as a means of redefining their power and legitimacy.¹³⁹ John III Vatatzes, the emperor in Nicaea, gifted the fragments in his possession to potential allies to portray himself as the legitimate emperor of Byzantium. Parts of the imperial treasury were transferred from Constantinople to Nicaea after 1204, e.g., the mid-tenth century ivory cross-reliquary, today in the church of San Francesco at Cortona.¹⁴⁰ John III Vatatzes (1222–1254) gave this *staurotheke* as a gift to Fra Elia de' Coppi, the envoy of emperor Frederick II (d. 1246).¹⁴¹ According to several sources, John III presented a piece of the Holy Cross to Sava Nemanjić, the first archbishop of Serbia in 1229 when Sava visited him.¹⁴² The Hilandar monastery on Mount Athos still preserves an old wooden *staurotheke*.¹⁴³ In medieval Serbia, the True Cross played an important role in the definition and promotion of the identity of the newly established Serbian state.¹⁴⁴ The cult developed and received its true ideological structure in the days of the second generation of the Nemanjićs, and it is possible to discern its influence on the fresco decoration of Studenica and Žiča.¹⁴⁵

In the Empire of Trebizond, Manuel I Komnenos 'the Great' also had a small fragment of the True Cross kept in a reliquary, now in the treasury of Notre-Dame at Paris.¹⁴⁶

Unlike in Nicaea, Trebizond or Serbia, there is no evidence from Epirus of a reliquary with the True Cross after the catastrophe of 1204. This victory symbol of the Byzantine emperors occurs, however, on a preserved coin of the Epirote ruler Theodore. The coin depicts a patriarchal cross-crosslet, which is placed on a long shaft whose base ends in three steps. A half-length figure of Theodore and St Demetrios are flanking the cross, on its left and right sides, respectively.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the representation of angels venerating the Holy Cross with an inscription Η ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΙΣΗΣ from the diakonikon in the Church of Ag. Nikolaos tis

Rodias could also have had decidedly ideological and political resonance, in addition to its correlation with the rest of the iconographic programme in the upper register of the diakonikon.¹⁴⁸ The wars fought for the reestablishment of the fragmented Byzantine Empire in the thirteenth century provide the political context for this fresco, which should be dated to the time of Michael II Doukas. An image of Constantine and Helena with the wooden cross between them lies on the south side, across from the angels, in the lower register. The remains of the cross venerated by the angels make it clear that this object was very similar to the cross placed between the first Christian emperor and his mother. This indicates that the presence of the theme of the cross could have served as a reminder of the lost relics that were once kept in Constantinople and the Epirote state's desire to see them as symbols of victory. Moreover, the choice of the location for the depiction, the diakonikon, lends further support to the possibility that it carried an ideological message. The purpose of the diakonikon is, *inter alia*, to house and preserve relics.

Another iconographic theme at Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias could also relate to the memory of relics from the imperial city. In the centre of the apse, in the lower zone of the main altar, between the officiating hierarchs placed in the profile position and facing the centre of the apse is depicted the Holy Mandyllion (Fig. VII-4). It is well-known that the Holy Mandyllion was one of the most treasured sacred relics in the Byzantine Empire. However, it was among the many relics transported to the West after the capture of Constantinople in 1204. Notably, this event caused more frequent depiction of the Mandyllion in Byzantine monumental painting.¹⁴⁹ In Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, the Holy Mandyllion is shown in the lower register of the bema (Fig. VII-4), between the concelebrating hierarchs, i.e., in the position where one would normally expect to see the *Melismos*.¹⁵⁰

Therefore, one could say that in the bema and the diakonikon of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, the two most important of Constantinople's relics are represented: the True Cross and the Holy Mandyllion. This iconographic choice reiterates in a sense the programme of the aforementioned two-sided icon, now in Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. On this icon, the precious contents from the church of Pharos are illustrated—the Holy Mandyllion and the True Cross (Fig. 17)—while two archangels hold in a raised position the other two important relics: the sponge and the lance.¹⁵¹

In the iconographic programme of the sanctuary paintings in the church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, perhaps another scene could be associated with the liturgical tradition of Constantinople. The scene is the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple located on the front of the conch (prothesis). Its placement in the sanctuary was quite common, as has been observed in other Byzantine churches. It corresponds semantically to the content of the scene, according to which the Virgin Mary enters the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Solomon. This particular place, i.e., the Holy of Holies, where the event took place, is semantically identical with the abaton of the sanctuary of the Byzantine churches.¹⁵² The placement of the Presentation in the prothesis niche of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, as well as the composition of the scene, may have another interpretation, as well. This iconographic



Fig. 17 Icon of the Adoration of the Cross from the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, second half of the twelfth century, obverse

(© The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)

theme had been developing from the tenth century and included the little Virgin Mary, followed by her parents, and seven young virgins. This layout appears at the same time, when the weekly procession of the icon of the Mother of God, which took place every Tuesday, becomes a permanent event in the urban life of Constantinople. This transcended everyday life by allowing the people who participated in the procession to perceive the image as the face of the Virgin Mary herself and to participate in the event of the Presentation. This pictorial narrative representation allows us to understand the layout of this Byzantine procession in Constantinople. Older representations of the Presentation of the Virgin

Mary do not depict the virgin girls who follow the little Virgin Mary. Rather, the theme gradually evolved with the addition of the seven virgins holding lighted candles in their hands. The description of the procession of the Hodegetria mentions the presence of young damsels in silk clothes who sang church hymns and walked behind the icon. Therefore, the pictorial solutions in the wall painting of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary may recall the real procession of the image in Constantinople.¹⁵³

On the right side, the priest Zechariah is placed with the Virgin Mary accompanied by seven virgins with lighted candles and followed by Joachim and Anna. This particular arrangement, where the two saints are placed between the Virgin Mary and her parents, is the new iconographic type, which will dominate the Palaialogan art.¹⁵⁴

After the aforementioned, Pentcheva's proposal that the iconographic theme of the Presentation was inspired by the procession of the Virgin Mary's icon in Constantinople seems plausible. Therefore, the depicted scene, along with the Mandylion from Sanctuary and the Veneration of the Holy Cross from the diakonikon, needs to be seen as influence from Constantinople. It is also notable that in the second zone on the southern wall of the prothesis and on the northern vault of the northern bay is depicted a developed cycle of the Mother of God with some new scenes, whose iconography was also impacted by Constantinopolitan art.

In the fresco programme of the sanctuary in Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, there are other iconographic peculiarities that may reflect the contemporary ecclesiastical climate. These peculiarities include differences between the two churches, the Orthodox and the Latin, which were on display in monumental art from the eleventh century onwards.¹⁵⁵ In the Prothesis where the Holy Gifts—namely, bread and wine—are prepared in order to perform the Divine Liturgy, the Pentecost is depicted, i.e., a theme that, among other things, certifies the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and whose invocation changes bread and wine into body and blood of Christ.¹⁵⁶ This liturgical invocation does not exist in the Latin Liturgy and is one of the two most important liturgical differences between the two liturgical practices.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the area of the Holy Sanctuary, we can identify representations of several clergymen of the western church, mentioned earlier.¹⁵⁸ Leo of Catania (Fig. VII-2; n.66) is depicted on the eastern front of the entrance to the prothesis. St Sylvester and possibly Pope Clement are illustrated in the prothesis itself. It is uncertain, however, whether Pope Clement or Clement of Ohrid (Fig. VII-2a; n.64) is depicted here since Theophylact of Ohrid is portrayed in the sanctuary of the same church and the Epirote rulers were associated with the Archbishopric of Ohrid.

In the lower register of the main church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, full-length figures dominated by ten warrior saints, are portrayed. All their heads are lost, but their military outfit and armour are still visible. They are presented in frontal posture. Another prominent warrior, St Artemios, is represented above the capital on the eastern side of the northwestern column in the main church, as well. St Artemios appears with full military attributes, which was not the case before the thirteenth century when he was depicted only as a martyr in civilian garb.¹⁵⁹ Frontally represented warriors in full military gear were painted in the lower zone

of the northern and southern walls in the church of Ag. Theodora. Today, only parts have been preserved. Also, in the church of the Metamorphosi Sotiros at Plakoti (XXIV-1; n.17 and 18). similar representations are extant.¹⁶⁰

The Byzantines believed in the help and protection of warrior saints on the battlefield. Depictions of warrior saints, especially when done together with rulers have been well attested from the middle Byzantine period. In Menologion of Basil II, fol. 3, Basil II is surrounded by medallions of warrior saints.¹⁶¹ From the middle Byzantine period, warrior saints were placed in the lower register of the iconographic programme of many churches, for example in Nerezi and Kurbinovo.¹⁶²

Epirotes often included the representation of warrior saints, thus emphasising their military capacity. As we have seen, the Komnenos Doukas rulers Theodore, Manuel, and Michael II were represented on the coinage together with St Demetrios, one of the most prominent military saints. They are also shown receiving the crown from him. Archangel Michael was also frequently represented as a warrior together with Epirote rulers on their coins.¹⁶³

However, at the same time, we should not forget the influence of the contemporary political climate in Epirus or the result of the battle against the crusaders. The case was similar in the Peloponnese and elsewhere in Greece, where the ideological background of political and ecclesiastical issues often influenced iconographic themes and programmes in monumental paintings.¹⁶⁴ In this context, we should see the representations of warrior saints on horses in Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra¹⁶⁵ and the Old Metropolis in Veria.¹⁶⁶

The wall paintings of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias are representative of many stylistic elements that are characteristic of the Komnenian art. In one group of scenes, however, (e.g., the Ancient of Days, the Dormition of the Mother of God, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, events from the *Life of St Nicholas*), the painter introduced innovations. They consist of the more plastic elaboration of the faces, the manner of positioning the figures in the scenes, the deepening of the space, the painting of a large number of interesting ornamental details on the buildings and on the clothing, etc. He enriched the iconography with many narrative elements and new individual iconographic motifs, and, in this respect, its iconographic programme comes very close to the monuments of the Palaiologan period.

The frescoes of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias surpass the quality of Epirote monuments that date to the beginning of the first half of the thirteenth century, e.g., the churches of the Episkopi in Mastron, Ag. Stefanos at Rivio, the Metamorphosi Sotiros at Plakoti, as well as some parts of the decoration of the Old Metropolis in Veria, the church of the Dormition in the village of Episkopi in Evrytania and Ag. Demetrios Katsouris near Arta. This is especially true in terms of the complexity of the iconographic programme, the use of lapis lazuli, and the use of certain solutions in the style of painting. The analysis of the iconographic programme and the style indicates that the decoration of the Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias dates to the second half of the thirteenth century.

3.4. Art in Aitolokarnania

Art patronage also continued throughout the second part of the thirteenth century in Aitolokarnania, which was an important part of the Epirote State from its foundation. As seen in the case of the Episkopi church in Mastron, Varnakova monastery, and of Ag. Andreas in Chalkiopoulos, the foundation and decoration of some churches and monasteries there could also be connected with the Komnenos Doukas family, as well as with the military and civil aristocracy of the Epirote state.¹⁶⁷ To the time of Michael II Dukas, we can date the frescoes in five churches: Ag. Pateres in Varassova, Ag. Ioannis Theologos (Efpalio Doridos), Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos, Hosios Andreas in Halikiopoulos, and Ag. Georgios Kainourios.¹⁶⁸

I will not dwell on a detailed description of the frescoes of these churches, since they are either only partially preserved or follow the usual iconographic programme without any specific features. I will single out only one interesting scene from the cave of the Holy Fathers in Varassova,¹⁶⁹ very similar to the previously described representation of the Veneration of the Holy Cross from Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias. Two angels, flanking the Cross, carry a lance and a sceptre, respectively. Beneath the Cross, the four rivers of heaven flow. An uncial inscription identifies the representation: ἡ Ὑψο(σ)η τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ (Fig. X-1).¹⁷⁰ Visual representations of public ceremonies commemorating the feasts of the Cross adorn illustrated manuscripts as early as the eleventh century, e.g., in the manuscripts of the Dionysiou monastery 587, 119b (eleventh century) and the Panteleimon monastery 2, 189b (twelfth century), while in frescoes they appear relatively late, mainly in churches from the late Byzantine era. Scholars have expressed diverging opinions regarding the date of the wall paintings in this church (from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries).¹⁷¹ I would argue that they should be dated to the thirteenth century.¹⁷²

The fresco with the inscription Η ΥΨΩΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ (Fig. X) in the cave church of the Holy Fathers in Varassova does not represent the historical event of the Exaltation of the Cross in the same way as the depictions in the aforementioned manuscripts or in monumental painting. The only frescoes of the Exaltation of the Cross in which angels appear are in the churches of Ag. Georgios at Ano Viannos, Crete,¹⁷³ and of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati in Platanistasa (1494), Cyprus.¹⁷⁴ Apart from its basic eschatological meaning, the representation from Varassova should be placed within the same ideological framework as the one suggested for the Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias.

After the aforementioned, I would suggest that these representations bear ideological and political messages, too, and should be placed in the context of the pictorial representations of ideological responses to the thirteenth-century Latin occupation. The four rivers of heaven, which flow from the cross in the representation in Varassova, allude to the *New Zion*, i.e., Constantinople. Byzantine imperial ideology sought to sacralise the emperor's power by identifying it with the most powerful Old Testament rulers of Israel. In some written sources of the thirteenth century, one can observe a parallel drawn between the chosen people

of Israel exiled to Babylon, where they expected a saviour from the Davidic tribe to lead them to Jerusalem, and the New Israelites exiled from the *New Zion* to the newly established states, Nicaea and Epirus, expecting the moment when the Orthodox rulers would return them to the *New Zion*, i.e., Constantinople.

During the 1230–1268 period, the Epirote artistic production significantly flourished, as demonstrated in the previous analysis. Architecture, sculpture, the iconography of monuments, and coinage all followed the local middle Byzantine patterns but were also influenced by new trends from Constantinople/Nicaea and the neighbouring states, including the Latin ones. The rulers Manuel, John, Michael, and Theodore Komnenos Doukas used their artistic patronage to lay the claim on the power and to show their piety. Moreover, through works of art, they often promoted their Byzantine legacy and Epirote independence.

Notes

- 1 Prinzing, 1984, 95f and 102, 2011, 82f.
- 2 Nicol, 1957, 113–127; Bredenkamp, 1996, 199–261.
- 3 Ferjančić, 1979, 93–101.
- 4 For collection of Manuel's coins, including photos and bibliography. see www.wildwinds.com/coins/byz/manuel_thessalonica/t.html.
- 5 Wroth, 1911, pl. XXVI, 10; Mattingly, 1923, 33.
- 6 Goodacre, 1957, 304, no.1
- 7 On Theodore's coins and his subtle propaganda, see Chapter 2, p. 49.
- 8 Wroth, 1911, 198, pl. XXVI, 7; Kontogiannis, 2013, 719–720; Nicol, 1957, 205.
- 9 Wroth, 1911, 199, pl. XXVI, 10; Mattingly, 1923, 33, Class II, 34, Class III; 39.
- 10 Morrison, Fig. 14.
- 11 Longuet, 1943, 142, no. II; Nicol, 1957, 205.
- 12 This coin's preservation is not good, but the inscriptions confirm the name of Manuel and Constantine. See www.wildwinds.com/coins/byz/manuel_thessalonica/t.html.
- 13 Akropolites, 44.
- 14 Nicol, 1957, 116.
- 15 Fundić, 2013a, 239–240.
- 16 Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou and Tourta, 1997, 6–30.
- 17 Djurić, 1979, 217; Tsigaridas, 1987, 100; Papazotos, 1994, 243, n. 476.
- 18 Chatzidakis-Bacharas, 1982, 111, ill. 36.
- 19 Djurić, 1967b.
- 20 Vojvodić, 2016, 50, Fig. 19a.
- 21 Djurić, Ćirković and Korać, 1990, 17, 18, 35, 37.
- 22 *Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες και εικόνες: Εθνική Πινακοθήκη, Σεπτέμβριος–Δεκέμβριος 1976*, Αθήνα 1976, 27–37, pin. V-XVI, 4–18.
- 23 Zias, 1989, 98.
- 24 Akropolites 60.10–61.14.
- 25 John III Vatatzes supported Manuel Doukas financially and with six ships. See Nicol, 1957, 135.
- 26 Akropolites 61.15–62; Nicol, 1957, 134–136.
- 27 Nicol, 1957, 139.
- 28 Bendall, 2002.
- 29 For iconographic types see Bendall, 2002.
- 30 Bertelè, 1951a, p. 19, no. 1, pl. 1, 1; Nicol, 1957, 206–207.
- 31 Bertelè, p. 29, no. 38, pl. III, 38.
- 32 Nicol, 1957, 207; Kontogiannis, 2013.

- 33 About the Petraliphaina family, see Chapter 1, p. 31.
- 34 Mattingly, 1923, 32–33, pl. III; Wroth, 1911, 226; Bertelè, 1951b, 25–26, pl. III.
- 35 Nicol, 1957, 209–210.
- 36 Geanakoplos, 1953b, 103–104; Nicol, 1994, 11–23.
- 37 Nicol, 1957, 172–173.
- 38 Valentini, 1939, 63.
- 39 For more on this, see Geanakoplos, 1953b, 107–117.
- 40 See Chapter 1, pp. 19–22.
- 41 Theis, 1991.
- 42 Giannoulis, 2010, 209–225, Figs. 43–50, 509–520; Papadopoulou, 2015a.
- 43 See cat. no. IV.
- 44 Papadopoulou, 2007, 384.
- 45 The text is taken from a sticheron for the feast of mid-Pentecost: Ἐν τῷ Ἱερῷ ἐπέστης, ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, μεσουσης τῆς ἑορτῆς, διδάσκων καὶ ἐλέγχων τοὺς ἀπειθεῖς Ἰουδαίους, τοὺς Φαρισαίους καὶ Γραμματεῖς, καὶ βοῶν παρηρσίᾳ πρὸς αὐτοὺς . .
- 46 See Chapter 1, p. 21, and cat. n. XI.
- 47 Vokotopoulos, 1993–1994, 199–210; Bouras, 2001, 256.
- 48 Bouras, 2001, 256n. 76.
- 49 Medea, 1939, Figs. 23, 48, 137, 155.
- 50 In Platsa Mani, See Mouriki, 1975, 25, 34–35, Fig. 1.
- 51 Panagia Drosiani, Ag. Ioannis at Kerami, Agioi Georgios, and Nikolaos in Lathreno. See Chatzidakis, 1989.
- 52 Ag. Menas at Lindos, Ag. Phanourios in Rhodes, and Ag. Niketas at Damatria. See Kefala, 2015, 74–77, 151–151, Fig. 23.
- 53 Restle, 1967, III, Fig. 551.
- 54 Vokotopoulos, 1993–1994, 199–210.
- 55 See cat. n. I.
- 56 For an extensive bibliography on this church, see cat. n. 1.
- 57 Giannoulis, 2001.
- 58 Ibid., 2001, ph. 58 and 59, 2010, 286–287.
- 59 Fundić, 2013a, 157–158.
- 60 Radojčić, 1933–1978.
- 61 See Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, Fig. 13.
- 62 Gerstel, 2001, 274.
- 63 Fundić, 2018, 295, Fig. 15.2. For similar hats, see Linardou, 2011b, 175, Fig. 11.1
- 64 Giakoumis, 2011, 433–436.
- 65 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, Fig. 13.
- 66 Safran, 2014b, 264, 32D.
- 67 De Giorgi, 2007.
- 68 Safran, 1991, 1992, 460–461, Fig. 12–14.
- 69 Chouliaras, 2019, 494.
- 70 Fundić, 2010, 89.
- 71 Safran, 2005, 179–192.
- 72 For the cult of St. Eustathios, see Doherty, 1993; Panofsky, 1950, 2–10; Velmans, 1985; Thierry, 1991, 33–100.
- 73 Fundić, 2013b, 153–156.3
- 74 For additional information about the formation of the cult of St Eustathios in the West, see Amprazougoula, 2008, 166, n. 27.
- 75 Medea, 1939, 228–231, Fig. 160.
- 76 Ibid., 237–239, Fig. 162.
- 77 Pace, 2008, 383, Fig. 1, 10.
- 78 Svoronos, 1959, 70.
- 79 Dželebdžić, 2012, 129.
- 80 For more on this, see Falkenhausen, 2007, 95–121.

- 81 Katsaros, 1981, 241, 242, 250–251.
- 82 Patterson-Ševčenko, 1983, pl. 7, 1–8.
- 83 Fundić, 2010, 92–93, 104.
- 84 In representations from the thirteenth century, such as in Ag. Sofia in Monemvasia, in Ag. Nikolaos in Megalli Kastania in Mani, in Bojana, and in Melnik in Bulgaria, we notice that in the event when St Nicholas saves the ship from the storm, the saint is in a sitting position, with a stern face, and looks at the sailors who sit quietly in front of him and wait for a miracle to happen. See Patterson-Ševčenko, 1983, 31, 34, 35, 101, pl. 7.6, 10.7.
- 85 Nicol, 1957, 115.
- 86 Safran, 1992.
- 87 Hoeck and Loenertz, 1965, 148–235.
- 88 Safran, 1992, 457.
- 89 Nicol, 1957, 115–116; Galoni, 2008.
- 90 Carr, 2020, 85; Patterson-Ševčenko, 1993–1994, 158–160.
- 91 Carr, 2020, 84.
- 92 See cat. no. XIX.
- 93 St Andrew the Hermit probably died on 15 May 1281/1282. See Kissas, 1992, 212–214.
- 94 Rhoby, 2009, 137–139.
- 95 Kissas, 1992, 212.
- 96 Rhoby, 2009, 91.
- 97 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 49–50.
- 98 Nicol, 1957, 132.
- 99 See, p. 28.
- 100 Papadopoulou, 2015a; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009.
- 101 Eadem, 81.
- 102 Fountas, 2005, 133, 2008, 99.
- 103 See Chapter 1, p. 19.
- 104 The fresco decoration of the Vlacherna monastery belongs to the same iconographic and stylistic context seen in the refectory of Patmos, Mileševa, and in Sts Apostles in Peć, all dating to the period of the third and fourth decade of the thirteenth century. It also recalls later dated frescoes of Sts Nicholas and Panteleimon in Bojana (1259), which in recent publications are associated with the art of Nicaea. The excellent decoration of the Vlacherna monastery in Arta can also be associated with the art of Constantinople / Nicaea.
- 105 Papadopoulou, 2015a, 83–105.
- 106 Orlandos, 1936f, 41, Fig. 40; Papadopoulou, 2015, 100–101, Fig. 80.
- 107 Velenis, 2015, 136–137, Fig. 109.
- 108 Orlandos, 1936e, 147.Pa
- 109 Djurić, 1979, 215; Papadopoulou, 2002, 69; Vokotopoulos, 2007, 51.
- 110 More than a decade ago, I conducted a field-survey in this church, during which I identified many previously unidentified scenes and read the majority of the preserved inscriptions. I also proposed its dating to around 1250–1260 based on a detailed analysis of the iconographic programme, including its stylistic features. See Fundić, 2010.
- 111 Fundić, 2010, 93–94, Fig. 19a.
- 112 In previous studies, this representation is identified as the Adoration of the Magi. See Orlandos, 1936e, 142, Papadopoulou, 2002, 68 and Giannoulis, 2010, 24.
- 113 Kappas and Foustieris, 2006, 61–72; Fundić-Kappas, 2016,
- 114 Kitzinger, 1995, Fig. 75.
- 115 Grabar, 1958, 33–34, pl. XXXIII.
- 116 Evans and Ratliff, 2012, 89, Fig. 55.
- 117 Piatnitsky, 2000, no. B6, 51–52.
- 118 Mango and Hawkins, 1966, 159, Figs. 34, 45–46.

- 119 Lazarev, 1997, taf. 5.
- 120 Mijović, 1980, Fig. 76.
- 121 PG 28, 961A. The sermon is found among the works of Athanasius characterised as *spuria*.
- 122 Οἱ παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν, οἱ καὶ τὸν νόμον πάλαι ἐν Σινᾷ δοὺς τῷ Μωσεῖ, σήμερον βρέφος οἱράται (Great Vespers, sticheron at the Lily). *The Festal Menaion*, 412.
- 123 Οἱ παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν, νηπιάσας σαρκί, ὑπὸ Μητρός Παρθένου τῷ Ἱερῷ προσάγεται (Great Vespers, sticheron at the Lily). *The Festal Menaion*, 415.
- 124 Νηπιάζει δι' ἐμέ, οἱ Παλαιὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν, καθαρσίῳ κοινωνεῖ, οἱ καθαρῶτατος Θεός, ἵνα τὴν σάρκα πιστώσῃ μου, τὴν ἐκ Παρθένου (Mattins, Sessional hymn). *The Festal Menaion*, 418.
- 125 Ὅνπερ οἱ ἄνω λειτουργοὶ τρόμῳ λιτανεύουσι, κάτω νῦν οἱ Συμεῶν, ὑλικάϊς ἀγκάλαις δεχόμενος, τὸ θεῖον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰνοῦσθαι ἐκήρυττε. (Great Vespers, sticheron at the Lily). *The Festal Menaion*, 413.
- 126 Lampe, 804.
- 127 Καὶ σοῦ τὴν καρδίαν ἄρθορε, ρινοφαῖα διελεύσεται, Συμεῶν τῇ Θεοτόκῳ προηγόρευσεν, ἐν Σταυρῷ καθωρώσης, τὸν Ὑιὸν ᾧ βοῶμεν· Εὐλογητὸς οἱ Θεός, οἱ τῶν Πατέρων ἡμῶν. (Mattins, kanon, ode seven). *Festal Menaion*, 424.
- 128 *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, vol. 1, 24–27.
- 129 Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Ceremonies*, 124–128; Cameron, 1987, 106–136.
- 130 Papamastorakis, 1987–1988, 324 for references.
- 131 Mijović, 1973, Fig. 19a.
- 132 Ibid., 119.
- 133 The bibliography on the history and cult of the relic of the True Cross is extensive. General overviews include Frolov, 1961; Klein, 2004, 31–59; Wortley, 2009.
- 134 Frolov, 1958, 13–30; Thierry, 1981, 205–228.
- 135 For the Cross taken into battle by Maurikios and Heraklios, see McCormack, 1986, 247–249.
- 136 Klein, 2004, 94.
- 137 Nikephoros, *Short History*, 80; Klein, 2004.
- 138 Belting-Ihm, 1965, 142–166; Lipinsky, 1968, 185–203; Frolov, 1965, 187, Fig. 95; Cameron, 1980, 67–68; Ó Carragáin, 2005, 236, Fig. 43, Pl. 6–7.
- 139 Eastmond, 2004, 204–216.
- 140 Frolov, 1965, 40; Oikonomidis, 1995, 77–79, illus. IV, V.
- 141 Frolov, 1961, 239, 432–433.
- 142 Miljković, 2008, 92 with references.
- 143 Miljković, 1999–2000.
- 144 Popović, 2003, 162–163 and references therein.
- 145 Popović, 1992, 38–41; Popović, 2003, 164–167.
- 146 Durand, 1992, 139–146.
- 147 Hendy, 1969, pl. 38.10, II, 272–273.
- 148 Fundić, 2013b, 95–96.
- 149 Gkioles, 2004, 275–276.
- 150 Konstantinidi, 2003, 483–489.
- 151 Kalavrezou, 2004, 57.
- 152 Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1979, 296–297; Maguire, 1999, 95–105.
- 153 Pentcheva, 2004, 200–201.
- 154 The examples usually cited include the representation from Panagia Koumpelidiki (Kastoria), Panagia Perivleptos (Ohrid), the Hilandar Monastery (Mount Athos), the Žiça Monastery (Serbia), Matejič (North Macedonia). See Grozdanov, 1997, 55–63. However, it has to be noted that the old arrangement of the depicted figures—namely, with Joachim and Anna in front of the virgins—is also preserved in churches from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, e.g., in Bojana, Gradac, Arilje, Pološko, the Perivleptos monastery (Mystras).

- 155 Gkioles, 2004.
- 156 In the early Christian period, the Hetoimasia or the Empty throne was depicted.
- 157 The other difference is related to the use of *azyma* (unleavened bread).
- 158 See p. 95.
- 159 The oldest example is preserved in the Timotesubani monastery in Georgia and dates to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and in Manastir (North Macedonia) dated to 1271. See Marković, 1995, 594; Walter, 2003, 193.
- 160 See p. 232.
- 161 Pentcheva, 2006, 85; Ševčenko, 1962.
- 162 Sinkević, 2000, 59–60, 66, Fig. LIII, LV.
- 163 See p. 144.
- 164 See Panagia Chrysafitissa in Laconia: Albani, 2000, 104–105, 124; See also: Gkioles, 2004.
- 165 Fundić, 2013b, 156–157, 250–252.
- 166 Skiadaresis, 2016, Figs. 273 and 275. See also above, p. 64.
- 167 Kissas, 1992, 210–237; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 57–59; Paliouras, 1985, 313–316.
- 168 See cat. n. X, XII. XVI, XIX,
- 169 See cat. n. X.
- 170 Vokotopoulos, 1967a, 325; Paliouras, 1985, 80, 176–178, Fig. 182; Vasilakeris and Fountouli, 2004, 535–548.
- 171 Paliouras, 1985, 80, 177–178; Vasilakeris and Fountouli, based mainly on a comparison with Cappadocian cave churches, accepts the early date of the wall-paintings, i.e., between the tenth and eleventh centuries. Vasilakeris and Fountouli, 2004, 538–539.
- 172 Vokotopoulos, 1967a, 325.
- 173 Papamastorakis, 1987–1988, 323–324, Fig. 5.
- 174 Stylianou and Stylianou, 1985, Fig. 116.

4 Epirus Between the Palaiologoi and the Angevins During the Reign of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas (1267/1268–1297)

In the last three decades of the thirteenth century, Epirus was exposed to many challenges, both from the Latins and from Nicaea. Michael II Komnenos Doukas was succeeded in 1267/1268 by his son Nikephoros in Epirus. Nikephoros did not consider the recapturing of Constantinople to be at the top of his list. Instead, he engaged much more with the maintenance of Epirote independence and its territories, thus maintaining friendly relations with the court in Constantinople. Furthermore, he was connected with Nicaea through his second marriage with Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, the younger daughter of John Kantakouzenos and Eulogia-Irene Palaiologina. Nikephoros became a puppet in Anna's hands, who served the interest of the Byzantine court in Constantinople. In this coalition Nikephoros was a vassal of Charles of Anjou and most of Epirus was under Charles's suzerainty.¹

In 1274, when Nikephoros understood that Charles I of Anjou was preparing a new campaign against the Byzantines, he decided to take advantage of the situation, seeing it as an opportunity to gain greater independence from the Constantinopolitan court. He sent envoys to Charles I to start negotiations with the kingdom of Naples and Sicily with the intention of forming an alliance. The alliance with Charles of Anjou and his half-brother John I Doukas of Thessaly was concluded in 1273 and lasted until 1282.²

From the other side, Michael VIII Palaiologos, who was informed about the preparations of a new attack from the West, signed a union between the Greek and Latin churches in Lyon in 1274. Michael accepted the pope's primacy but not the *filioque*.³ Many people in Constantinople who resisted the Union of Lyon were punished. Among them was Michael's sister Irene, by that time a nun named Eulogia, and her daughter Theodora Raoulaina, who was also a nun. The emperor exiled them from Constantinople and imprisoned them in the castle of St George on the Black Sea coast. When the bishop of Grosseto visited Constantinople in 1279, he saw at least four generals from the imperial family in prison.⁴ Many iconographic themes around Byzantine territory were inspired by responses to this union and the events surrounding it.⁵

4.1. Artistic Patronage of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas and His Wife Anna

Paradoxically, Nikephoros and John supported the anti-unionist faction in Byzantium despite being in alliance with a Catholic monarch. Nikephoros' western allies did not require him to sign the union. The majority of people in Epirus supported him in his decision.

Michael's successor, Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328), cancelled the Church Union of Lyons, probably at the council held at the palace of Blachernai in Mai 1284, and Eulogia was released from prison.⁶ Andronikos II supported the Byzantine Orthodoxy and had a pro-monastic policy.⁷ Michael VIII's corpse was not returned to Constantinople, and due to his unionist position, he was not buried according to Orthodox customs. His wife Theodora tried to distance herself from her deceased husband.⁸ The change on the Byzantine throne in Constantinople did not reflect positively on Epirus. In April 1281 at Albanian Berat, before becoming the emperor, Andronikos II checked Charles's expedition against Constantinople.⁹ Soon after his success in Albania, around 1282/1283, Andronikos began his campaign against the Epirotes. In 1282, Nikephoros' wife Anna went to Constantinople to celebrate the cancellation of the Union of Lyon and also to renew the alliance between Epirus and the new Byzantine emperor, Andronikos II. Nikephoros also sent his personal envoy to Constantinople, the bishop of Kozyle in Thesprotia, who was not involved in the Union of Lyon.¹⁰ The bishop participated in the ordination of the new patriarch of Constantinople. Nikephoros again started to serve the interests of the Byzantine court.

The aforementioned historical events may be recognised in the iconographic programme of the narthex in the Vlacherna monastery in Arta (Fig. V-2). This monastery continued to have a prominent position after 1270. During the time of Nikephoros and Anna, the narthex was added and richly decorated.¹¹ The creators of the programme connected eschatological, eucharistic, and hymnographic scenes with themes charged with theological conceptions that defined their ideological identity and projected their relations with the imperial capital.

The most important scene from the iconographic programme of the Vlacherna monastery is beyond any doubt the litany of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, which attracted the interest of many scholars due to its uniqueness (Fig. 18a).¹² The scene depicts the procession that occurred in Constantinople every Tuesday. This was the most significant litany from the processions and vigils that took place in Constantinople in honour of the Virgin Mary.¹³

The public procession of icons of the Virgin Mary was entwined with major extraordinary events, but established processions were also integrated into the Typikon of various churches and monasteries of Constantinople.¹⁴ As the Typikon of the Great Church shows, 68 different processions took place every year in the streets of Constantinople.¹⁵ According to travellers, in Tuesday's processions, the image of the Virgin Mary was surrounded by clergy and accompanied by laypeople and women in full silk clothes holding lighted candles. The procession passed by various churches in the city and then returned to the Hodegon monastery.



Fig. 18a Arta, Vlacherna monastery, narthex, litany of the icon of the Hodegetria
(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

During the Palaiologan period, this liturgical event of Tuesday diversified.¹⁶ The procession of the icon did not pass through other churches in the city but was limited to the square near Hagia Sophia. Specifically, the participants carried the image on their shoulders, chanting 50 times around the square. A visual testimony for this new, i.e., the Palaiologan, procession is the representation from Vlacherna of Arta, the theme of which coincides with the descriptions of the travellers.¹⁷

The centre of the composition from the Vlacherna monastery is occupied by a large icon of the Virgin Mary, which is held by a male figure (Fig. 18a). The iconographic type of the image that coincides with that of the Virgin Hodegetria is accompanied by the inscription ΜΗ(ΤΗ)Ρ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ Η Ο[ΔΗΓ]ΗΤΡΙΑ. On the left are two men, whose clothes, headgear, and wide belts are similar to those worn by the person in the centre. This is, obviously, the group of ‘ministers’ of the image, i.e., the members of the ministry of Hodegetria, whom *Patria* narratives

call *Hodegoi* (guides).¹⁸ On either side of the image are groups of women, of whom three on the left are formally dressed. A large three-storey building with balconies, from which women observe the procession, is also represented. Below, at the first level of the composition, there are trading scenes (Fig. 18b), a very important pictorial source of information for the study of public life in Byzantium.



Fig. 18b Arta, Vlacherna monastery, narthex, litany of the icon (detail)

(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

This is a representation of an open-air market that accompanied the weekly event of the litany, for which it is reported that 'it was in the square on the day of the litany and many things were brought for sale'.¹⁹

Similar processions existed in other parts of the Byzantine Empire, such as in Thessaloniki, where from the twelfth century on, the icon of Hodegetria was regularly carried around the city²⁰ or in the eleventh century at the monastery of Panagia Nafpaktiotissa in Thebes, which held a miraculous icon of the Virgin.²¹ Although no relevant information has been preserved in the written sources, it is quite likely that similar processions took place in Epirus as well.

The representation of the litany as a separate scene in the narthex of the Vlacherna monastery is unique in Byzantine monumental painting. The examples of processions of the Virgin Mary's image are also preserved in some small works of art, such as the Hamilton Psalter (c. 1300) at the State Museum in Berlin, depicting the veneration of the icon of Our Lady Hodegetria.²² Similar representations also exist in the icon of the triumph of Orthodoxy (c. 1437) from the British Museum in London²³ and in the embroidered ecclesiastical cloth dating to 1498 from the Moscow State Historical Museum.²⁴ Also, from the fourteenth century, on the scene with the procession of the Hodegetria icon, there started to be depicted the twelfth oikos of the Akathistos Hymn, both in manuscripts and on monumental paintings, e.g., the icon of the Akathistos from the Kremlin State Museum in Moscow,²⁵ the Psalter of the Benaki Museum 34.3, fol. 194r,²⁶ the Tomić Psalter 2792 fol. 296v in the Historical Museum of Moscow,²⁷ the frescoes of the Markov monastery.²⁸ Apart from the Akathistos Hymn, in the monumental painting, the representation of the litany is integrated into other iconographic themes, such as the scene of the translation of the relics of Symeon Nemanja to the Panagia church in the Studenica monastery, where an image of the Virgin is carried in the litany.²⁹

The interpretation of the litany's representation in Vlacherna's narthex is provided by its inscription and in particular its first word, *χαρά* (*joy*): *The joy of the most holy Theotokos Hodegetria in Constantinople* (Η ΧΑΡΑ ΤΗΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΓΙΑΣ Θ(ΕΟΤΟ)ΚΟΥ/ ΤΗΣ Ο(ΔΗ)ΓΗΤΡΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΝ ΤΗ/ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΙ). The use of the term *joy* is not accidental. Based on this word, Acheimastou-Potamianou suggested that the image is not the usual weekly procession of the icon but a special event that demonstrates the joy of the church and the congregation.³⁰ The event that caused so much happiness was the renouncement of the Council of Lyon and the subsequent peace that came to the Eastern Church signifying a new triumph of Orthodoxy. According to Acheimastou-Potamianou, the scene of the litany depicts not only the litany but also the historical event of the reunion of three women—Anna Palaiologina of Epirus, her sister Theodora Raoulaina, and their mother Irene-Eulogia.³¹ The same scholar also suggests that in the northern barrel vault of the narthex, above the wall painting of the litany, the two local councils that were connected with the renouncement of the unionist policy of Michael VIII were probably depicted, i.e., those of Blachernae and Adramyttium in 1285 and 1284, respectively. In the lower-left corner of the scene miniatures of two women in bust, dressed in maphoria and without a halo, are depicted. They have been

identified as Anna Palaiologina and her sister Theodora Raoulaina (Fig. 18a). The presence of women in councils was not usually accepted, and even less was their participation depicted in Byzantine monumental art. Historical sources testify that Anna Palaiologina with her mother and sister were present at the Council of Adramyttium in 1284; however, there is no mention of their presence at the Blachernae Palace council that was held from February to August 1285.³²

The depiction of local councils along with ecumenical ones was not unusual in Byzantine art, e.g., in the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where six local councils together with six ecumenical are depicted.³³ Moreover, the same is true for Serbian monuments during the thirteenth century. In medieval Serbian churches, next to the ecumenical councils, local Serbian councils are frequently depicted, e.g., in Sopoćani, Djurdjevi Stubovi, St Demetrios in Peć, Mateič.³⁴ The portrayal of local councils, however, cannot be found in wall decoration in Greece.

As already mentioned, scenes of ecumenical councils are partially preserved in the southwestern barrel vault of the narthex. Along with these scenes, there are representations of other historical events. After unsuccessful efforts by the Byzantine emperor to impose the union of the churches agreed in Lyon, the patrons of the Vlacherna monastery might have purposefully chosen to depict the representations of the ecumenical councils as a reminder that in these councils the true church doctrine was formulated. It needs to be emphasised at this point that similar iconographic programmes were widespread towards the end of the thirteenth century, i.e., shortly after the Council of Lyon. As already mentioned, the theme is depicted in certain important churches, such as the Metropolis of Mystras (Ag. Demetrios), as well as in Serbian medieval churches, including Sopoćani, Gradac, Arilje, St Sophia in Ohrid, St Demetrios in Peć, Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren, etc.³⁵

Similar ideological content might be hidden in selecting the scene of the Hospitality (Philoxenia) of Abraham for the semicircular lunette in the Vlacherna's narthex southern wall.³⁶ In some cases in the monumental painting, the Hospitality is connected to representations of ecumenical or other local councils that are usually included in the iconographic programme of the narthex. In the Orthodox Church tradition, there is the belief that the ecumenical councils were inspired and guided by the Holy Trinity and that they formulated the Trinitarian doctrine. The Hospitality of Abraham, which is symbolically interpreted as prefiguration of the Holy Trinity, is represented at the same place as the ecumenical councils. Based on this belief, Djurić connected the scene of the Hospitality of Abraham at Djurdjevi Stupovi (1282/1283) with the four local Serbian councils that are depicted in an adjacent frame. At the beginning of every local council, the creed, which was adopted during the two first ecumenical councils, was read.³⁷

The celebrated scene showing the procession of the Hodegetria icon in the narthex of the Vlacherna monastery in Arta—itself a 'replica' of the eponymous Constantinopolitan shrine—makes the association with the imperial capital explicit.³⁸ Seen in conjunction with the ecumenical councils depicted above it, the procession of the Hodegetria may be also read as a celebration of the triumph of Orthodoxy following the demise of the short-lived Union of Lyon, to which

the person who commissioned the murals, *basilissa* Anna, the wife of despot Nikephoros, was strongly opposed, as has been suggested by Acheimastou-Potamianou.³⁹ This representation can be seen as another example of reminiscences of Constantinople since in the scene of the litany a procession of the famous icon with many realistic details from the everyday life of the city is depicted, including the market with its merchants and the crowd that swarms there, buildings, garments, etc.

The iconographic programme of the narthex is related to the cult of the Virgin Mary. Over the main entrance to the principal church, there is the Virgin Glykophilousa between two angels. On the western wall's southern arch, the procession of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople is depicted. On the surface opposite to that, in the northern part of the narthex, the Christmas sticheron is portrayed.⁴⁰ This sticheron is, in fact, connected with the festival of the monastery, as the church was dedicated to the synaxis of the Virgin (26 December).

The quite rare representation of the Christmas *sticheron* 'What shall we offer Thee, O Christ' (Τί σοὶ προσενέγκωμεν, Χριστέ)⁴¹ seems to have appeared in the thirteenth century but did not become very widespread. Inspired by the rich content of the famous and very popular hymn, the scene represents angels, people, and elements of nature offering symbolic gifts to the Virgin and Christ participating in the event of the incarnation.⁴² The wall painting from the Vlacherna monastery has been considered one of the earliest representations of this theme,⁴³ as all other known representations of the *sticheron*, as, for example, in the church of the Virgin Perivleptos in Ohrid, the one in Žižica or the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki could be regarded as either contemporary or later.⁴⁴ A fragment of the scene carved in relief on the canopy arch, preserved in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, also dates to the thirteenth century. It contains three verses: the Magi [offer] gifts/angels [offer] a hymn/shepherds [offer] their wonder. The preserved fragment should not be considered an epitomised form of the scene, as it is very likely that additional verses were depicted on the other sides of the ark.⁴⁵

The choice of this scene is related, without a doubt, to the fact that the monastery was dedicated to the Virgin Blachernitissa. On Christmas Eve, the hymn Τί σοὶ προσενέγκωμεν, Χριστέ is sung since the following day, December 26, the Synaxis of the Mother of God in Blachernae, the patron of the Vlacherna monastery, is celebrated. The representation of the hymn is also related to the fresco of the procession with the image of the Hodegetria icon, located on the same wall since both have as a common point of reference, which is the glory and the widespread praise of the Virgin Mary.⁴⁶ However, the choice of this representation, as well as the place where it was depicted—namely, in the narthex next to the entrance and in the immediate vicinity of the portrayal of the procession—was certainly not only related to the feast of the Virgin Blachernitissa to which the church is dedicated. Moreover, the location of the representation of the Christmas hymn and that of the procession with a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary, in which figures from the ruling dynasty are included, could also be seen as somewhat reminiscent of a Byzantine court ceremony. Among many court ceremonies held during great feasts, there was one that the emperor solemnly conducted to

St Sophia and then back to the palace. According to Constantine Porphyrogenetos, who provides its description, this procession would meet with the one led by the Constantinopolitan Patriarch at the entrance into the narthex ahead of the liturgy.⁴⁷ The content of the Christmas hymn speaks of offering gifts to and serving the incarnate God, a practice in which everyone participates, including both spiritual and secular authorities who led those two processions. To this understanding of the location of this representation also points the fact that in some cases, e.g., at Žiča, the fresco is accompanied by depiction of two separate processions: the one led by the spiritual leader—namely, the Serbian Archbishop Sava III (d. 1316)—and the other by King Milutin (d. 1321), meeting at the entrance to the church.⁴⁸

There is no written evidence for the patronage of Nikephoros and Anna. However, the style of the Vlacherna's frescoes points to the period after 1280. Acheimastou-Potamianou suggested a date shortly after 1284.⁴⁹

The truly impressive and innovative execution of the painted ensemble, which is observed mainly in the original compositions of the procession and the Christmas hymn, is also supported by the bold design. At the same time, however, to the extent that the condition of the murals allows us to judge with certainty, serious weakness in terms of design and rendering of the figures can be seen, both in proportions and design. It is clear that the artistic stigma of the painter is floating and does not reflect either the best versions of the Komnenian art or the progressive pursuits of Palaiologan art. The painter of the narthex does not seem to be aware of or to participate in the renewed artistic current that would soon mature and dominate the wider sphere of influence of Constantinople and Thessaloniki. Thus, the interestingly developed iconography of the narthex is not supported by a similarly progressive style, given that the anonymous painter and his workshop were relocated from Constantinople. One would expect the execution to be of much higher quality, worthy of the capital. On the contrary, the work is inspired by a 'provincial' character, manifested in the simplistic design solutions but also in chromatology, despite the fact that expensive materials such as lazurite and gold are used. The artist is indifferent about the proportions of the bodies, which are sometimes represented as elongated, as in the choirs of the nuns in the procession of the Hodegetria, while at other times they are compressed in order to serve the needs of the composition, as in the case of the ecumenical councils and the *sticheron*. There are, of course, exceptions such as the two shepherds of the *sticheron*, which is obviously due to a faithful transfer of a very good model. In general, although the painter does not hesitate to create original compositions, he resorts to the stereotypical and simplistic repetition of physiognomic types and postures that reveal his weaknesses.

After the addition of the narthex and its decoration to Vlacherna, probably during the period between 1290 and 1294, the large monastic church of Pantanassa at Philippiada, the foundation of Michael II Komnenos Doukas, was renovated.⁵⁰ Unlike the narthex of the Vlacherna monastery, where no written evidence is preserved, the patronage of Nikephoros and his wife Anna in Pantanassa is attested by the inscription⁵¹ and donors' portraits (Fig. 19a and b).



Fig. 19a Filippiada, Pantanassa, donor representation and inscription

(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

Pantanassa was a cross-in-square church of a complex Constantinopolitan variant. During Nikephoros Doukas' reign, it was framed by an ambulatory, which ends in two chapels on either side of the nave. Except for the southern two chapels, only the foundations of this church are extant. Many fragments of the wall paintings have been discovered during the excavation of the church. The central apse was decorated by six concelebrating hierarchs. The lower registers were decorated with paintings, representing either *podea* or imitations of marble revetment. At the bottom of the northern and southern walls of the transverse cross-arms, *opus sectile* decoration survived. In the higher sections of the walls fragments of individual saints still exist in supernatural scale/size. The frontal arch of the apse of the southern chapel was decorated with busts of saints, of which the representation of the apostle Peter is better preserved. The image of St John of Damascus, holding an unfurled scroll, can be seen in the northern part of the eastern barrel vault. Parts of the face of Mark the Evangelist can be identified on one of the pendentives of the north chapel. Murals also exist on the exterior elevations of the nave—namely, in the arches of the western and southern walls.⁵² The depiction of the founders was located at the western end of the southern portico. They are depicted as being crowned by the Virgin in bust, holding the Christ child in her arms (Fig. 19a), while fragmentary inscription with surnames Komnenos

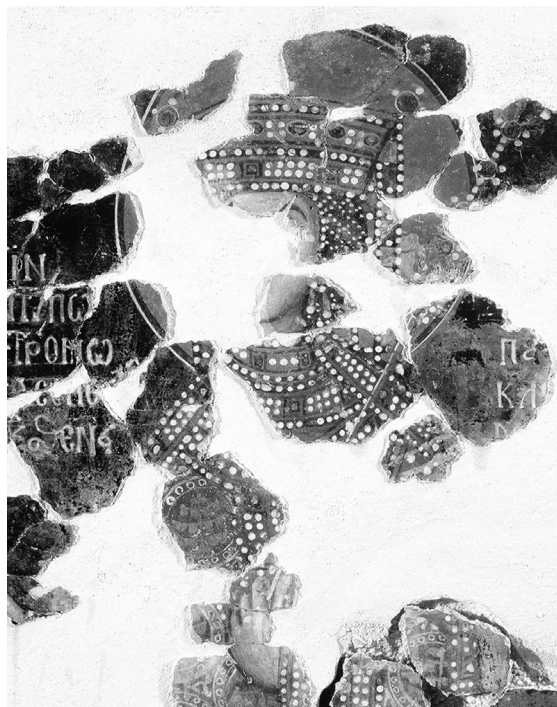


Fig. 19b Filippiada, Pantanassa, donor representation (detail)

(photo: author)

Doukas and Anna Komnenodoukaina Palaiologina accompany the depicted figures.⁵³ Their two children, son Thomas and daughter Thamar, are also portrayed in this image.

The donor representations of the rulers with their families, which are often blessed by Christ or the Virgin Mary, are already known from mid-Byzantine manuscripts.⁵⁴ They are particularly common, however, on frescoes of the Palaiologan era, e.g., at the refectory of the Perivleptos monastery (Sulu Manastir) in Istanbul, the Treskavac Monastery, the Pološko monastery.⁵⁵ In the case of Pantanassa, we can see that the promotion of the Constantinopolitan cult of the Mother of God continues in Epirus.⁵⁶

Although in both churches, Vlacherna and Pantanassa, the frescoes are preserved in fragments, they are very important. In fact, they can contribute to the dating of other wall paintings of neighbouring churches in Epirus but also in the wider possibly interrelated area.

4.2. Artistic Promotion of Nikephoros's Alliances

Despite the attempts by Nikephoros' wife Anna, the relations with Nicaea and Epirus were very fragile. According to *Chronicle of the Morea*, in 1290, the forces

of Andronikos II laid siege to the castle of Ioannina while many ships came to the Gulf of Arta, but the attacks were unsuccessful. Anna tried again to mediate between Andronikos II and Nikephoros by attempting to unite the ruling families of Epirus and Constantinople through marriage between her daughter Thamar and Michael IX Palaiologos, Andronikos II's son and co-emperor. Notwithstanding the failure of this scheme, her son Thomas received the title of despot from the emperor in 1290. Countering this, Nikephoros decided in 1294 to reinforce his alliance with Latins, giving his daughter Thamar as wife to Philip of Taranto, the son of Charles of Anjou. In order to strengthen this alliance further, Nikephoros granted Philip the larger part of his realm as Thamar's dowry: fortresses at Nafpaktos, Euclohos (near Agrinion), Angelokastron, and Vonitsa (Fig. 1). According to the agreement, Thamar was also to pay annually the sum of 100,000 hyperpyra to her husband Philip.⁵⁷

Although initially Anna opposed this idea and tried to marry her daughter in Constantinople instead, she relented and in August 1294 escorted her daughter to L'Aquila in Abruzzi, where the wedding took place. The wedding likely happened on or after 13 August 1294.⁵⁸ A work of miniature art relates to this wedding. It is a gilded and enamelled casket, one of the wedding gifts from Thamar to her husband Philip (Figs. 20a and b) that is today exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum of Cividale del Friuli in Italy.⁵⁹ This casket is shaped like ivy and decorated with lilies, the symbol of the house of Anjou, and double-headed eagles, the symbol of the Byzantine court. Thamar's wedding gift was likely intended to symbolise the union of the two civilisations.

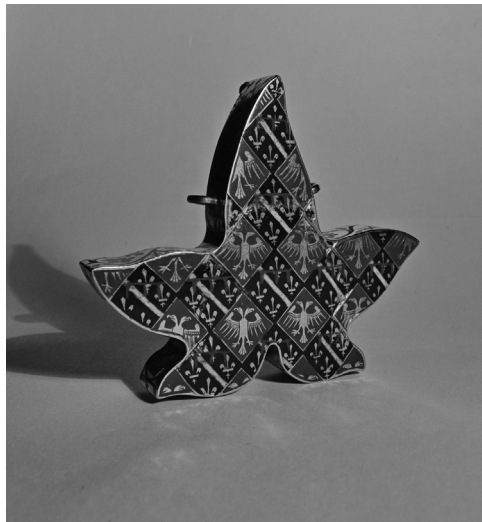


Fig. 20a Gilded and enamelled casket, obverse, National Archaeological Museum of Cividale del Friuli

(© Fondo Biblioteca ex Capitolare, inv. 1678, National Archaeological Museum of Cividale del Friuli, Ministry of Culture Regional Direction of Museums of Friuli Venezia Giulia)



Fig. 20b Gilded and enamelled casket, reverse, National Archaeological Museum of Cividale del Friuli

(© Fondo Biblioteca ex Capitolare, inv. 1678, National Archaeological Museum of Cividale del Friuli, Ministry of Culture Regional Direction of Museums of Friuli Venezia Giulia)

It seems that Nikephoros used a double-headed eagle as a symbol of their imperial power. In the donor representation from the porch of the Pantanassa in Philippiada, Anna is dressed in royal garb decorated with circles that enclose plants and double-headed eagles.⁶⁰ Also, in the *katholikon* of the Parigoritissa monastery, Nikephoros's foundation, a relief marble arch in the western part of the main church, which preserves a dedicatory inscription with the names of Nikephoros, Anna, and their son Thomas, is decorated with a double-headed eagle and heraldic lion in the middle of the arch and fleur-de-lys (Fig. 21).⁶¹

Furthermore, the western-style capitals of the baldachin in Parigoritissa are also decorated with the same flower, fleur-de-lys, but of a much higher quality of carving and very close to the preserved western examples.⁶² The heraldic motives, fleur-de-lys, and lions were widespread in the West but also in Byzantine territories conquered by the Latins, including the Peloponnese.⁶³ They provide a comparable example of intercultural artistic exchanges between the territories under Byzantine influence and the West, as we can see in the case of the marble slabs from the grave of the aforementioned Epirote princess Anna/Agnes, daughter of Michael II Komnenos Doukas, wife of William II Villehardouin.⁶⁴ The slabs, of which only a part is preserved, were found in Villehardouin's burial church of St James in Andravida, marking 1286 as the year of Agnes's death. The central decoration of these slabs has all the characteristics of Byzantine tradition and is framed by a Latin inscription 'Here lies Madame Agnes, in former times the daughter of the despot lord Michael'.⁶⁵



Fig. 21 Arta, Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa, the dedicatory inscription on the west wall of the nave, sculptured on the relief marble arch above the western entrance (photo: Georgios Fousteris)

This indicates that despot Nikephoros likely tried to visually express his loyalty to the Latins through artworks that he commissioned. In Parigoritissa in Arta, along the marble arch with a dedicatory inscription, noteworthy are other arches, as their technique and iconographic themes do not represent Byzantine sculptural traditions. Linda Safran believes that decorative arches derive from the West with links to western France and southern Italy.⁶⁶ A typical example is the depiction of the cross-nimbed lamb holding a Latin cross portrayed on the apex of the western arch.⁶⁷ Christ was often represented as the lamb of God in early Christian iconography and as a lamb holding a cross in medieval times. This theme, never used in the Orthodox Church after the Quinisext Council of 691/692 banned figurative depictions of Christ, appears frequently in western iconography.⁶⁸ The occurrence of a cross-nimbed lamb in the context of an Orthodox medieval dynastic church is noteworthy, particularly if we consider that Epirus was the principal opponent of the union between eastern and western churches agreed at the Second Council of Lyon (1274). Even though Nikephoros and Epirote bishops never subscribed to this short-lived union, his close relationships with his western allies resulted in certain influences on the Epirote artistic production. As seen from the example with the lamb, these influences did not always follow eastern artistic traditions.

Multiple changes can be seen in the Epirote artistic production during the reign of Nikephoros. For example, abundant western influences can be observed in his dynastic church, the Theotokos Parigoritissa in Arta, which resemble Italian late medieval art (Fig. II-1).⁶⁹ This is the largest church in Epirus commissioned by despot Michael II around 1250 and renovated around 1290 by Nikephoros and Anna. The Parigoritissa is almost a square three-storey building with six domes. It is built according to the octagon-domed plan surrounded on two sides by two chapels and a large narthex. Orlandos compares this church with Renaissance palaces, but S. Čurčić disagrees with this comparison and instead sees closer similarities to two-storied monastic churches, such as the katholikon of Hosios Loukas.⁷⁰ C. Bouras has noticed that 'the interior dynamism of the Parigoritissa is related to contemporary European architectural trends; however, the techniques

and methods used in constructions are improvisational, original and foreign to the western tradition'.⁷¹ Typologically, the *katholikon* is a unicum in Byzantine architecture. It is obvious that the builders attempted to maintain their Byzantine tradition by using as their model churches from northern Greece, Thessaloniki, and Constantinople. At the same time, we can also observe the presence of different western elements. As a result, they produced their own architectural style, merging new elements with traditional forms.

The central dome of Parigoritissa is decorated with a mosaic of the Pantokrator (Fig. II-3) surrounded by cherubim, seraphim, wheels, and 12 prophets.⁷² They could be dated to the thirteenth century and represent a veritable work of Palaiologan art. There were also seated evangelists on pendentives but only some fragments of the northwest mosaic depicting St Mark and of the southwest identified by Orlandos as St. Luke have been preserved.⁷³

The modification of Parigoritissa was completed before the death of Nikephoros in 1296; however, its decoration was left unfinished, perhaps because of Nikephoros' death and the difficult political situation that ensued during the reign of his wife Anna and son Thomas.⁷⁴ The last time that his daughter Thamar was present in Arta was at the beginning of 1295⁷⁵ when we can presume that the church of Parigoritissa was inaugurated. It seems obvious that various artisans from different centres were employed in the Parigoritissa in an effort to create a unique building, which Nikephoros intended to use to promote his own regal ambitions.

Using Nikephoros' foundation and Thamar's dowry, I tried to demonstrate the existence of ideological content in the function of patronage. This does not, however, negate the fact that the geographical position of Epirus on the western edge of the Byzantine world and frequent unofficial contacts between Byzantines and Latins in this area also created a fertile ground for influences and syncretism, be they artistic or affecting other spheres of life.⁷⁶ For example, in Epirote architecture during the first half of the thirteenth century, it is possible to distinguish several Frankish elements.⁷⁷ A new architectural type of cross-vaulted churches is likely of western origin and can be related to Norman churches in Sicily. This type appeared chiefly in mainland Greece in the thirteenth century.⁷⁸ A version of this type with three aisles is present in the Peloponnese, Euboea, Crete, and Epirus, with the oldest examples coming from Epirus, i.e., the churches of Panagia tou Bryoni (1238)⁷⁹ and Kato Panagia near Arta.⁸⁰ The architectural plan of these two churches was perhaps influenced by the transept typical of the Italian Gothic or Romanesque cathedrals, which is slightly evocative of the Trani cathedral in Apulia, the church of St Nicholas in Bari, and the cathedrals in Cefalù and in Monreale.⁸¹

Nikephoros's Pantanassa monastery in Philippiada also has Frankish elements.⁸² The church has a Byzantine architectural plan of a large domed inscribed cross with two chapels and an ambulatory. However, two entrances, to the south and to the north, from the ambulatory to the main church had pairs of colonnettes, which clearly formed Gothic-style porches.⁸³

It is also worth mentioning that the outer pi-shaped portico added to the church of Ag. Theodora in Arta, covered with Gothic-style pointed ribbed groin vaults

which could be dated to the second half of the thirteenth century Western influences, is also evident.⁸⁴

Unlike in the Peloponnese and some parts of Greece, there are comparatively few influences of Latin art in Epirus other than the aforementioned example of Parigoritissa, despite its geographical proximity to southern Italy and the existence of alliances with Latin rulers throughout the thirteenth century. This is another indicator that the Epirotes worked diligently to maintain their Byzantine identity.

4.3. Aristocratic Patronage at the End of the Thirteenth Century

Despite the severe crisis that Epirus experienced in the last years of Nikephoros' reign, there is no sign that this crisis translated into art. Rulers of Epirus together with church dignitaries dominated in the area of patronage during the entire thirteenth century. By the end of the thirteenth century, members of the local Epirote aristocracy and rich dignitaries also start appearing as founders of churches and monasteries, as in other parts of the Byzantine Empire.⁸⁵ They commonly depicted themselves in dedicatory scenes and included their names in inscriptions, the fact that facilitates the study of their patronage. Two important Epirote monuments sponsored by Epirotes aristocracy are the church of Panagia Vellas in Voulgareli,⁸⁶ also known as the Red Church, and the Panagia in Preventza.⁸⁷

The church of Panagia Vellas in Voulgareli (Fig. IX-1.) was built and decorated by Protostrator Theodore Tzimiskes and his wife Maria. This is known from an inscription placed on the western wall of the nave, above the entrance door. Theodore Tzimiskes possibly participated in the battle of Berat in 1281 as *protostrator* of the army of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas. In the inscription, Theodore is mentioned together with Nikephoros and Anna 'who hold the sceptre of the western fortresses, the despots of the famous Komnenos family'.⁸⁸ Additional two donors are located to the right of the Virgin Mary, while their names are indicated on the accompanying inscription as those of John and his wife Anna Tzimiskaina.

The church was built in 1281 and decorated with frescoes in 1293/1294,⁸⁹ which are barely preserved (Fig. IX-2).⁹⁰ However, the most important scene, which contains the donor portraits, dedicatory inscription, and several saints, is extant and provides an insight into Epirote patronage and society. The long dedicatory inscription is placed among two stylite saints located on the western wall of the nave above the entrance (Fig. IX-3). On the southern side, Daniel the Stylite can be identified. Only several letters of his name have been preserved; left of him Ο Σ and on his right Δ, Λ, and Η, consistent with the spelling of the name Daniel (ΔΑΝΙΗΛ). In addition, the portrait also has characteristics associated with Daniel the Stylite as represented in other Byzantine churches, including the painted railing, which is part of the pillar. All these eliminate the identification with the prophet Daniel, as some scholars have mistakenly proposed.⁹¹

To the north of the inscription, small fragments of an image of another saint are preserved (Fig. IX-3), including the lower part of the face with the beard and an analavos with a cowl (koukoulion). Given that Daniel the Stylite is represented

on the opposite side, we can assume that the other famous stylite saint, Symeon, is represented in a symmetrical arrangement since frequently these two stylites are depicted in pairs in Byzantine wall paintings, e.g., in the church of Taxiarches in Kostaniani (Fig. XXIII-4).⁹² Moreover, the figure has an analavos with a cowl (koukoulion), which usually characterises Symeon the Stylite in Byzantine art.

Daniel the Stylite is depicted in three-quarter view with his right palm open in front and facing the viewer, while the gesture of the damaged right hand seems to have been symmetrical, i.e., in a standing position, similar to the standing position of Symeon the Stylite from the churches of Ag. Georgios in Loganiko, Laconia⁹³ and Taxiarches in Kostaniani (Fig. XXIII-4). The figure of Daniel the Stylite from the church of Panagia Vellas presents a particularly close prosopographic, artistic, and expressive connection with the homonymous figure from the church of Taxiarches in Kostaniani. Worth noting is the choice to place the stylites at Panagia Vellas in a prominent place on either side of the dedicatory inscription in a church built by military patrons. The stylite saints were quite different from monks who lived in isolation or in monasteries. Instead, they led their ascetic life near inhabited places and played an active role in society, with Symeon the Stylite being the most well-known example.⁹⁴ According to his *Life*, he played an important social role in the neighbouring communities.⁹⁵ Apart from imparting spiritual advice, he also facilitated reconciliation in cases of social conflicts. Moreover, he had a special relationship with soldiers, and, like other stylite saints, he foretold important



Fig. 22 Voulgareli, Panagia Vellas, donors in the narthex
(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

events to people. Therefore, we should probably see the role of the stylites in the iconographic programme of Panagia Vellas in this context. Their connection to the inscription is demonstrated by the position of Daniel the Stylite, who is depicted in a three-quarter posture turning to the inscription as he points to the text which informs us about the donors and the ruler of the period. This is an unusual position for stylites, who are generally depicted in a frontal pose. A holy man is imbued with power, so this representation can be seen as the saint's blessing and prayer for the church donors and for despot Nikephoros, who is also mentioned in the inscription. We must keep in mind that in Christian thought the word 'style' always had the meaning of moral solidness and stability. In an epistle attributed to the apostle Paul, the church is characterised as 'the pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Tim 3:15). Hence, the presence of the pillar and the pillar saints could also have a symbolic meaning.

The stylites were generally portrayed in different parts of Byzantine churches but more frequently on columns and pillars. Their placement close to the entrance to the church has also been noted, e.g., in Nerezi,⁹⁶ the monastery of Chora,⁹⁷ Kučevište,⁹⁸ the church of Panagia in Cerskë near Leskovik in southern Albania.⁹⁹ Depicting the pillar saints on either side of the Panagia Vellas' main entrance can at the same time be connected to the recurrent idea of a triumphal entry, which derives from imperial art of the Late Antiquity.

Special relations are established between the donors and monastic saints located on the eastern wall of the narthex in the church of Panagia Vellas. In the middle, the enthroned Virgin Mary, surrounded by the donor couple, is depicted in a gesture of praying. On the left side, a male figure, identified as Protostrator Theodore, offers a model of the church to the Virgin. Near the dedicatory portrait, some of the most important founders of the monastic way of life are also depicted, including Sts John Climax, Euthymios, and Anthony the Great, together with two military saints who are partly preserved. One of them is identified as St Eustathios. Under the dedicatory scene, the iconographic programme consists of two small fresco icons. One of them shows St Bacchus and the other should be identified as St Sergios. Both figures are framed with red ribbons and resemble the portable or proskynetaria icons found on the eastern pillars. Placing similar representations in the area of the narthex is typical of Palaiologan art.¹⁰⁰ The figure of the Virgin Mary from the donor portraits is depicted with a three-quarter turn towards Christ, to whom she extends her hands in prayer (Fig. 22). Hence, we can conclude that the whole composition can be interpreted as a prayer and offering of the donors to Christ and the Virgin Mary and to their protectors Sts Sergios and Bacchus.

The selection of ascetic and warrior saints near the dedicatory scene of a church founded by military dignitaries could be understood as an attempt to stress the peaceful coexistence of these two pillars of the Byzantine society (the church and the military) through the depiction of two specific groups of saints who served as patrons of monks and military officials of the empire. The portrayal of the stylites and other saints, especially those that exemplify and represent monastic life, could be related to the fact that the church of Panagia Vellas belonged to a monastery. It is a known fact that monasticism had a strong influence both on the Byzantine

emperor and the medieval society in general, and particularly during this specific period when the revival of the Orthodox Church was considered as hope for the revival of the empire. For this reason, the emperors and other potentates placed military saints and ascetic saints on an equal base. The role of the monks who prayed for the rulers, soldiers, and ordinary people was considered very important. Consequently, the church decoration reflects the increased monastic influence and favourable policy of the emperors towards the monks. This phenomenon developed specifically at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, during the reign of Andronikos II, who was a pious emperor and also had sympathies for the monks. One of the best examples of the combination of the warrior and monastic saints can be found in the iconographic programme of the chapel of St Euthymios in Thessaloniki.¹⁰¹ The role of spiritual figures of Mount Athos monasticism who rose to the highest positions of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was also important. Examples of those are Patriarch Athanasios (1289–1293 and 1303–1309) and Theoleptos of Philadelphia, who encouraged the renovation of older churches and the construction of new ones.¹⁰² The Epirote wall painting was, undoubtedly, influenced by this artistic flourishing.

The close links between the ruler, military commanders, and other members of the society with monasticism did not appear for the first time at the beginning of the thirteenth century; similar tendencies existed already in the early Byzantine period. This relationship is reflected in many middle Byzantine decorations, e.g., at Nerezi, where monk saints and warrior saints are depicted in the lower register.¹⁰³

In addition to establishing the date of the church and the identification of its donors, the donor representation from the church of the Panagia Vellas offers also some other interesting testimonies about the monument and the era in which it was created (Fig. 22). For example, it provides important information about the thirteenth-century aristocratic female clothing.¹⁰⁴ Theodore and Ioannis Tzimiskes wear a caftan. The fabric is luxurious with circular decoration across the surface. Theodore wears a belt, the edge of which falls loosely. A white handkerchief hangs to the right of the belt.¹⁰⁵ The woman wears an undergarment with long tapered sleeves made of luxurious clothing and silk white lining, similar to the man but with a different woven decoration. Regarding the monumental art of the thirteenth century, only a fragment of female aristocratic clothing has survived in the ktetoric representation in the Holy Trinity church, Berat Castle, Albania.¹⁰⁶ Neither the head nor the upper extremities of the female figure survive on the damaged wall painting. It is possible to see from the lower part of the attire that the decorative motifs exhibit proportions analogous to the ktetoric portraits in the Panagia Vellas.

The donor representation from the Panagia Vellas also provides information about the original form of the building, as Protostrator Theodore Tzimiskes holds the model of the church. Representations with models of churches in the hands of their donors appear as early as the sixth century but were particularly common from the second decade of the thirteenth century. For example, such representations are preserved in almost every important church in Serbia.¹⁰⁷ Č. Marinković, in her comprehensive monograph about late antique and Byzantine churches, concludes that in those monuments where representations of donors with church

models are preserved (89 in total),¹⁰⁸ they typically have the actual characteristics of the churches they represent.¹⁰⁹ There are of course some depicted church models that are completely different from buildings as they survive today.¹¹⁰ Some deviations from the original can be observed, which mainly concern details (e.g., larger or smaller windows and similar), while the basic morphological elements of the buildings, such as the number of domes, are represented precisely. Most surviving examples show that they are an important testimony about the original form of the church, especially in those cases where significant subsequent architectural interventions have been made. Today, the church of Panagia Vellas seen from the outside looks like a cross-vaulted building (Fig. IX-1), though originally it was a cross-in-square of the two-pier (distyle) variant with a narthex. Initially, a dome stood above the nave, while its narthex was covered by a calotte. In the painted model of the church still preserved in the murals of the narthex, the monument is depicted from the northwestern side; in this depiction, a part of the dome can be seen with the windows opened in its drum. In the west elevation of the church, which is painted frontally in the model, a calotte and a gable can be identified, while in a lower level two-lobed windows can be seen with marble mullions.

An impressive model of a church included in the ktetoric representation is preserved in the Agia Triada church in the castle of Berat. The church possesses typological and constructional features that indicate a clear relationship with Epirote architecture. Both the masonry and the exterior ceramic plastic decoration of the window arches are related to the church of the Panagia Vellas, as well as to the Vlacherna monastery in Arta. The donor, accompanied by a female figure, most likely his wife, offers a model of the church to Christ. The figures cannot be identified, but they could represent members of a family of officials, such as in the Panagia Vellas. A. Christidou identifies the male figure with Andronikos Palaiologos, nephew of the emperor, who served in the area of Berat as a protobestiarios during 1301–1303.¹¹¹ The donor representation in the Agia Triada is located in the same place as in the Panagia Vellas, on the eastern wall of the narthex, and the model of the church shows its northwestern side. Judging by this representation, as well as several details on the costume, the churches of the Panagia Vellas and the Agia Triada in Berat could be interrelated stylistically. It should be noted that the time distance between the construction of the two churches could not have been longer than six years (1296/1301/1303).¹¹²

The similarity of the mural decoration between the Panagia Vellas and the Taxiarches in Konstaniani near Dodoni Catalogue XXIII,¹¹³ another important monument in Epirus, means that they should be included in the activity of the same artistic workshop. The donor inscription in the Taxiarches, which is located above the northern entrance, is not preserved intact,¹¹⁴ and the dating of the frescoes is estimated using stylistic criteria and through correlation with related churches with secure dates. There is much evidence pointing to a close affinity between the two churches, e.g., many similarities in the iconographic types,¹¹⁵ similar execution technique, and the same layout of the iconographic programme on the western wall, and morphological similarities of the letters in the accompanying inscriptions and in the texts of the scrolls. For example, the letter forms from the

scrolls of the hierarchs in the Panagia Vellas are found in several inscriptions that accompany images, as well as on textual scrolls in the Taxiarches Church in Kostaniani.¹¹⁶

An important church of Panagia in Preventza in Akarnania was subsidised by an Epirus *protostrator* and is dated to the end of the thirteenth century (Fig. XVII).¹¹⁷ Vassileios Tziskos founded this church. He was possibly *protostrator* of Acheloos, to which Preventza belonged. The Panagia in Preventza, a typical building of the despotate style, was flooded by the artificial lake created by the Kastraki hydro-electric dam. The frescoes from the church, approximately 110 square metres in extent, were removed in 1968 and can be found today in the warehouses of the Archaeological Service. Large sections of the frescoes had already fallen off before the paintings were removed. The church was decorated using a developed iconographic programme whose frescoes can be dated to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century. It is important to emphasise that the church in Preventza was dedicated to the Virgin Kyriotissa, which was another important Constantinopolitan shrine. In the apse of the bema, the icon of the Panagia Platytera with a medallion in front of her chest showing the image of Christ as a child was depicted. In the same church, in the conch of the narthex above the entrance to the nave, there was a medallion of the Virgin Hodegetria between two guardian angels. Evidently, the promotion of Theotokos following the example of miraculous icons from Constantinople continued even in the provincial areas of the Epirote state.

Overall, we can conclude that during the reign of Nikephoros (1266–1296), the Epirote art was affected by western influences mainly due to the alliances with the Angevins, but also because of geographical proximity and frequent connections with southern Italy. The artistic trends and patronage in Epirus, however, overwhelmingly continued to follow Byzantine traditions. Consequently, the Palaiologan artistic trends and characteristics from Constantinople, as well as other important Byzantine centres, continued to inspire and enrich the building and painting activities in Epirus.

Notes

- 1 For Nikephoros see Nicol, 1984, 10–50.
- 2 In this coalition Nikephoros was a vassal of Charles of Anjou and most of Epirus was under Charles's suzerainty. See Nicol, 1984, 23–25.
- 3 Geanakoplos, 1953a, 79–89; Laurent and Darrouzès, 1976.
- 4 Nicol, 1962–1964.
- 5 Gkioles, 2004; Fundić, 2015, 76–77.
- 6 Pachymeres, i. 14; Nicol, 1984, 30.
- 7 Gouma-Peterson, 1976.
- 8 Talbot, 1992, 297–298.
- 9 Nicol, 1984, 26–27.
- 10 Ibid., 30.
- 11 See cat. n. V.
- 12 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1991, 2009, 81–93, 115–122, Figs. 44–55, 2015, Figs. 136, 140–145; Parani, 2016; Carr, 2020, 83.
- 13 Vigils and procession happened regularly so that the Virgin was fully integrated into the everyday life of Constantinople. According to the Typikon of the Great Church, in

the streets of Constantinople, 68 different processions took place every year. See Janin, 1969; Majeska, 1984.

- 14 Carr, 2000, 325–337.
- 15 Baldovin, 1987, specifically Appendix 8, 292–297. During the twelfth century, apart from Tuesday's procession, there was another weekly procession that took place every Friday. It began from Vlacherna and crossed the city as far as the Chalkoprateia. This procession was established by John II Komnenos (1119–1143).
- 16 Vasiljev, 1932, 106–107; Lidov, 2004, 291–302; Pentcheva, 2006a, 133–135.
- 17 Pentcheva, 2006a, 134.
- 18 Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 2000, 379.
- 19 Vasiljev, 1932, 106–107.
- 20 Eustathios of Thessaloniki, 142 (11–12); Patterson-Ševčenko, 1995, 549; Lidov, 2004, 291–321.
- 21 The fraternity consisted of men and women, clergy and laity, living in various parts of Greece. The main activity of the fraternity of the Panagia Nafpaktiotissa was the transfer of the icon from one church to another, where, for a whole month, special services were held in her honour. Patterson-Ševčenko, 1995, 550.
- 22 Patterson-Ševčenko, 2000.
- 23 Cormack, 2000.
- 24 Majasova, 1971, no. 27.
- 25 Lidov, 2000, Fig. 23.
- 26 Patterson-Ševčenko, 1991, Fig. 6.
- 27 Belting, Dufrenne, et al., 1978, 261–265.
- 28 Tomić-Djurić, 2010, 359–376.
- 29 Babić, Korać and Ćirković, 1986, Fig. 72.
- 30 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1991, 46–48, 2009, 115, 120–122.
- 31 Eadem.
- 32 On this council, see Papadakis, 1997, 83–105.
- 33 Stern, 1936, 1948, 82–105.
- 34 Djurić, 1967a; Vojvodić, 2000.
- 35 On the development of the iconographic theme of the ecumenical councils in the Byzantine monumental painting, see Walter, 1970; Djurić, 1967a; Vojvodić, 2000, 11–20, 2005, 99–103.
- 36 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, Fig. 43.
- 37 Djurić, 1967a, 136.
- 38 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 81–92, 115–118, Figs. 44–55.
- 39 Eadem, 2009, 117–118.
- 40 Eadem, 2009, 93–97, Figs. 55–63, 135–141
- 41

<p>Τί σοι προσενέγκωμεν Χριστέ, ὅτι ὥφθης ἐπὶ γῆς ὡς ἄνθρωπος δι' ἡμᾶς; ἕκαστον γάρ τῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ γενομένων κτισμάτων, τὴν εὐχαριστίαν σοι προσάγει, οἱ Ἄγγελοι τὸν ὕμνον, οἱ οὐρανοὶ τὸν Ἀστέρα, οἱ Μάγοι τὰ δῶρα, οἱ Ποιμένες τὸ θαῦμα, ἡ γῆ τὸ σπήλαιον, ἡ ἔρημος τὴν φάτνην, ἡμεῖς δὲ Μητέρα Παρθένον, ὁ πρὸ αἰώνων Θεὸς ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.</p>	<p>What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as a man? Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi gifts; the shepherds their wonder, the earth its cave; the wilderness, the manger: and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us. (<i>The Festal Menaion</i>, 254)</p>
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- 42 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1985–1986, 301–306.
- 43 Vokotopoulos, 1997, 231.
- 44 Vojvodić, 2016, 154, 158, 160, 228 (Fig. 172); Starodubcev, 2000, 23–27.
- 45 Sklavou Mavroeidi, 1999, 189.
- 46 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 72–73, 113, 115, 119, 121; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 2000, 379, Fig. 221.
- 47 For this ceremony, see Dagron, 2003, 84–90.
- 48 Vojvodić, 2016, 160.
- 49 Kalopissi-Verti, 1999, 65; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2009, 105–122.
- 50 See p. 20 and cat. n. VIII; Vokotopoulos, 2008; Velenis, 2008, 83–85 and references therein.
- 51 See Chapter 1, p. 23.
- 52 Vokotopoulos, 2008, 58–66.
- 53 Ibid., 73–79; Velenis, 2008, 81–85.
- 54 Spatharakis, 1976, Figs. 6–8, 10, 11.
- 55 Cvetkovski, 2006–2007, 153–167.
- 56 For the Pantanassa Monastery in Constantinople, see Janin, 1969, 215–216. See Chapter 2, p. 49.
- 57 Nicol, 1984, 47–48.
- 58 Pachymeres. iii, 4: II, p. 202, v. 30: II, p. 450.
- 59 Bergamini and Gaberscek, 1992, no. II. 1; Castris, 2014, 114–119.
- 60 Vokotopoulos, 2008, Figs. 2 and 4.
- 61 Orlandos, 1963, 96–101, 154–155, Figs. 104–108; Katsaros, 1992, 521–522; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 53–54; Figs. 11–14; Papadopoulou, 2002, 151, Fig. 176;
- 62 Orlandos, 1963, 45–46, Fig. 40.
- 63 Kappas, 2016, 167, n. 73 and references therein; Marinou, 2007; Ousterhout, 2009, 164–165.
- 64 Nicol, 1957, 172–73.
- 65 Bon, 1957, 129–139, Vanderheyde, 2012, 359–72.
- 66 Safran, 1992, 457–459.
- 67 Eadem, 458, Fig. 3.
- 68 Canon 82. Mansi 11, cols. 977ff.
- 69 See cat. n. II.
- 70 Ćurčić, 2010, 568.
- 71 Bouras, 2001, 256, n. 76.
- 72 Orlandos, 1963, 108–127, Figs. 120–125; Riccardi, 2020, 155–157.
- 73 Orlandos, 1963, 119, 120, Figs. 124 and 125.
- 74 See the following chapter.
- 75 Nicol, 1984, 49.
- 76 Safran, 1992, 455–73.
- 77 Velenis, 1988, 279–280; Vokotopoulos, 1998–1999, 72–92 and references therein.
- 78 Vokotopoulos, 2012, 41–43.
- 79 Velenis, 1988, 279–280; Papadopoulou, 2002, 87–91.
- 80 Papadopoulou, 2007, 369–396.
- 81 Küper, 1990, 116–120, abb. 115–132; Bouras, 2001, 255–256; Vokotopoulos, 2012, 42–43.
- 82 Bouras, 2001, 56.
- 83 Velenis, 1988, 281, n. 17; Bouras, 2001, 253, n. 48; Vokotopoulos, 2007, 53–54; Fig. 54.
- 84 Bouras, 2001, 56.
- 85 For Byzantine's patronage during the thirteenth century, see Kalopissi-Verti, 2006a.
- 86 See cat. n. IX.
- 87 See cat. n. XVII.
- 88 See Chapter 1, p. 38.

- 89 Papadopoulou, 2002, 125.
- 90 See cat. n. IX.
- 91 Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 46, Fig. 34; Giannoulis, 2010, 322, Fig. 381.
- 92 Babuin, 2013, Fig. 6; Fundić, 2013b, 206–207, Figs. 224 and 225.
- 93 Chassoura, 1991, Fig. 53b.
- 94 Brown, 1971, 88–92; Eastmond, 1999, 87–88, 98.
- 95 Doran, *Simeon Stylites*.
- 96 Symeon the Stylite is depicted on the east wall of the narthex next to the entrance to the northwest chapel. See Sinkević, 2000, 71, Fig. LX.
- 97 Underwood, 1966, vol. 3, pl. 520.
- 98 Initially, there were three stylites: one on the south wall and the other two on either side of the entrance. Today, only the one on the south wall is preserved, while the other two vanished. See Djordjević, 1982, 44.
- 99 Symeon the Stylite is depicted together with the archangel Michael next to the entrance to the west wall of the church. Kirchhainer, 2004, 93, abb. 4.
- 100 S. Kalopissi-Verti has studied the appearance of such images in the narthex area. Kalopissi-Verti, 2006b, 123–131.
- 101 Gouma-Peterson, 1976; Gerstel, 2003.
- 102 Meyendorff, 1975. For the spiritual climate of the time, the relationship of the hesychastic circles of Mount Athos with Constantinople and the influence on art, see Kalomoirakis, 1989–90, 197–220.
- 103 Sinkević, 2000, Figs. X, LII, LIII, LV, LVI, LVII.
- 104 Parani, 2003, 74 and 7; Kontopanagou, 2016, 59–69.
- 105 Parani, 2003, 58–59, 60–62, 65, 66, 78, Fig. 87; Spatharakis, 1976, 204–206, Figs. 143–144, 146–151; Galavaris, 1995, 262, Fig. 226.
- 106 Christidou, 2010, 549, Figs 10.1, and 10.2.
- 107 For a catalogue, see Marinković, 2007, 93–195
- 108 The catalogue of Marinković lists 89 examples but does not include the one from the monastery of Panagia Vellas.
- 109 Marinković, 2007, 88–90.
- 110 Eadem, 44–45.
- 111 Christidou, 2010, 553–555, Fig. 10.2.
- 112 Meksi, 1972, 59–102.
- 113 See cat. n. XXIII.
- 114 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 52.
- 115 For example, see the representations of Daniel the Stylite and the apostle Peter. See Babuin, 2013, Figs. 3 and 4.
- 116 Fundić, 2013b, 207–208.
- 117 See cat. n. XVII.

5 Art and Patronage in the Principality of Epirus After 1296

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, a new reality can be observed in Epirote artistic production: one could say that art and patronage were mobilised to serve the preservation/of its 'Byzantine identity'. After the death of Nikephoros in 1296, a dynastic crisis broke out in Epirus due to the demand of his son-in-law, Philip of Taranto, to inherit the whole dominion. As pointed out in the previous chapter, despot Nikephoros, in his effort to reinforce an alliance with Italy, married his daughter Thamar to the son of Charles of Anjou, Philip of Taranto, and gave him as dowry the larger part of his realm.¹ The wife of despot Nikephoros, Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, never agreed to the concessions, including the wedding of her daughter Thamar with Philip nor any other western alliances of her husband. Consequently, after the death of her husband in 1296, Anna decided to default on the conditions of Thamar's dowry² and refused to deliver Epirus into the hands of her son-in-law Philip. She wrote to Philip explaining that he should be content with the four castles and the large allowance stipulated by Thamar's dowry. She also added that her son Thomas could not break his oath to his lord, the emperor of Constantinople. Another argument that Anna advanced was that the arrangement had been broken when Thamar was forced to abandon her Orthodox faith.³

Anna took over the government of Epirus as co-regent of her underage son Thomas, who was only six years old at the time. The regency of Anna proved to be quite successful; she took a stand against all sorts of pressure coming from the western borders.⁴ Anna worked to consolidate her own legitimacy and Thomas's authority in several ways. Such factors as her strong personality, the successful defence against the Latin attack in 1304, and the title of despot that Thomas had received from the emperor of Constantinople were sufficient to ensure succession. Still, Anna appears to have also sought to reinforce the legitimacy of her claim in a symbolic way, particularly via her patronage, as well as several iconographic themes that seemingly were employed at her behest.

Firstly, Anna probably played an important role in sanctioning the cult of her mother-in-law St Theodora, which constituted without a doubt a significant ideological base for Anna's rule, and which also stressed her kinship with the saint. Anna especially respected her mother-in-law, who undoubtedly served as

her role model. Theodora had always had a very important place in the political activities of the Komnenos Doukas family.⁵ The conversion of the church in Arta, initially dedicated to Ag. Georgios, to Ag. Theodora, as it remains until today, as well as the writing of the *Life of St Theodora*, dated to the thirteenth century, were possibly all initiatives undertaken by Anna. Furthermore, the narthex of the church of Ag. Theodora, including its fresco decoration and the marble sarcophagus for St Theodora's tomb (Fig. 31), situated in this narthex, could also be dated to the period of Anna's rule and even attributed to her patronage.

In this chapter, my primary focus will be on demonstrating the importance of patronage and art for the maintenance of the sovereignty and Byzantine identity of Epirus by focusing on iconographic themes that would resonate with the period's political and ideological concerns.

5.1. The Narthex of the Church of Ag. Theodora in Arta

Theodora, the wife of Michael II Doukas, founded a monastery in Arta dedicated to St George sometime around the middle of the thirteenth century (Fig. I-1).⁶ The tripartite narthex was probably added to this church at the end of the thirteenth century. It was adorned with frescoes that could be dated to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Despite having suffered considerable damage, a large part of the original decoration is still preserved (Fig. I-2a).

From the middle of the thirteenth century, the iconographic programme of the Byzantine narthex started to develop significantly. The chosen specific themes from the Old and New Testaments followed an intricate symbolic system, encompassing different depictions of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, which were influenced by their rendering in Byzantine literature, both ecclesiastical and other manuscripts.⁷

The wall paintings in the narthex of Ag. Theodora provide important material for exploring the development of Byzantine iconography, especially due to the appearance of some unusual and rarely depicted themes. The frescoes include various events from the Old and New Testaments, as well as individual depictions of certain saints and prophets. Among them are representations of 'types' or prophetic prefigurations of human salvation fulfilled in the New Testament through the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ.⁸ Some of them are unique, not only in Epirus but in the broader area during the period in question (the thirteenth and first decades of the fourteenth centuries). Along with a theological interpretation of wall paintings, in this chapter, I shall also attempt to situate some aspects of the iconographic programme within a broader political context of the period. In other words, it will be argued that the choice of some scenes and the artistic patronage were generally employed to articulate some sort of Epirote political propaganda, as well as to reinforce dynastic loyalty, continuity, and power.

It was common both in Byzantium and in the newly established neighbouring states, which were within Byzantium's cultural orbit, to use narratives from the Old Testament to associate the emperor with certain Old Testament's prototypes, as has been discussed already in the second chapter.⁹ Furthermore, certain biblical stories had an association with the theological reinforcement of the legitimacy of hereditary power and were exploited in imperial encomia and illustrated in Byzantine narthexes. For example, several painted cycles inspired by the Old Testament, such as the life of Joseph, which are preserved in the narthex of some Serbian monuments, including Sopoćani and Lesnovo, are primarily interpreted in the context of legitimacy and directly connected with the ideology of the Serbian rulers.¹⁰ In this light, some parts of the iconographic programme in the narthex of Ag. Theodora will be discussed.

Among the depicted scenes, the representations of the life of the Patriarch Jacob, inspired by the narration of Genesis (Chapters 25–50), are of the greatest interest. The cycle is depicted in the upper registers of the south barrel vault (Fig. I-4). The beginning of the cycle must have been in the east lunette of the barrel vault with the scene of the blessing of Jacob by his father Isaac (Gen. 27). Most of the scene is destroyed today. In its left part, there is an old man sitting in front of tall buildings and focusing his attention on the opposite side. Isaac's plan was to pass the family blessing onto his favourite son Esau. However, after the conniving of his wife Rebecca and his second son Jacob, the old and blind Isaac failed to recognise that the man claiming to be his favourite son Esau was actually Jacob. As Esau was planning to murder his brother, Jacob was forced to flee for his life (Gen. 27.41; 28.5; Fig. 23).

The event of the flight of Jacob to his maternal uncle Laban in Harran consists of three narrative scenes (Fig. 23). It includes the farewell of Jacob from his father Isaac, Jacob's journey into Mesopotamia, and his dream and vision of the heavenly ladder. The farewell of Jacob from his father Isaac is depicted in the top left register. According to Gen. 27, 41–28, Isaac sends Jacob to find a wife from the house of Laban. The event takes place in Isaac's house. The old and blind Isaac is reclining on the bed while speaking, and Jacob with arms crossed is standing in front of his father. Jacob's mother Rebecca is also included in this representation (Fig. 24). She is seated on the right side while another standing female is placed behind her and a curtain.

Just underneath the farewell is the flight of Jacob. Jacob is portrayed on the shore of the River Jordan. He is taking off his boots and preparing to cross the river. Two personified sources of the river are depicted on the left side of the scene.

The third episode, Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28, 10–15), is depicted in the western part of the south barrel vault (Fig. 23). According to Genesis, Jacob had a dream during his journey. He saw a ladder standing on the earth and reaching to the sky with four angels ascending and descending the ladder, while Jesus Christ is blessing Jacob from the sky. Jacob is sleeping under the ladder and one of the ascending angels almost steps on his head.



Fig. 23 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, farewell of Jacob and his flight to Mesopotamia

(photo: Georgios Foustieris)

In the upper register of the western side of the south barrel vault, the events from the house related to Jacob's departure from Laban are depicted (Gen 31). After spending 20 years in the house of his uncle and having had 12 sons and 1 daughter, following the vision from God,¹¹ Jacob decided to return home to his brother Esau (Gen 31).

The return of Jacob to Palestine is depicted in the northern part of the southern barrel vault. The fresco vividly represents the events described in Genesis 32:1 (Fig. 25 and Fig. I-7). Jacob stopped in Mahanaim, where he camped and saw a vision of an angel. In the left part of the scene, there are two personified sources of the Jordan River.¹² Some of Jacob's children are depicted swimming in the river, and some of them are taking off their clothes and are ready to jump into the water. Jacob is portrayed four times in this cycle: praying, twice in conversation with an angel, and departing after the conversation (Fig. 25).

The cycle of Jacob ends on the west wall under the central door with a representation of his wrestling with the angel (Gen. 32:22–32; Fig. 26).

The extensive painted cycle from the life of Jacob in the narthex of Ag. Theodora is unique in Byzantine monumental painting. The only scene from Jacob's life that was frequently depicted in monumental art since the early Christian period is Jacob's vision of the heavenly ladder (Fig. 23). The example from Ag. Theodora in Arta follows the usual iconographic scheme, which slightly varied over history. Some characteristic examples could be in St Sophia in Trebizond



Fig. 24 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, Rebecca from the farewell of Jacob and his flight to Mesopotamia, narthex

(photo: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 25 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, return of Jacob to Palestine
(photo: Georgios Fousteris)



Fig. 26 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, Jacob wrestling with the angel
(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

(thirteenth century)¹³ and in the church of the Perivleptos in Ohrid (1295).¹⁴ In all these representations, Jacob reclines to the right or under the ladder, with angels ascending and descending the ladder, and Jesus blessing from the sky.

Depicted cycles from the life of Jacob are only known from illuminated manuscripts dated to the middle Byzantine period. They are preserved in four decorated Octateuchs: the eleventh-century Octateuch Vat. gr. 747 and three twelfth-century Octateuchs: Seraglio G. I. 8, Smyrna A. 1, and Vat. gr. 746.¹⁵

The composition in the southern part of the barrel vault in Ag. Theodora, which includes the departure of Jacob from his father's house, his journey into Mesopotamia, his dream and vision of the heavenly ladder, is very similar to the image in other manuscripts Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 22v (Fig. 27), and Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 29v.¹⁶ It could be argued that these illuminated middle Byzantine manuscripts might have served as a model for the painters of the narthex of Ag. Theodora in Arta. This assumption is based on a comparison between the iconographic schemes, such as the layout, landscape elements, buildings, furniture, and the same number of participating figures with their features. Among the details that show the dependence of the frescoes on the manuscript is the depiction of the two personifications of the rivers in the life of Jacob (Fig. 23 and Fig. 27). However, the frescoes are provided with many details, forming rich landscapes: e.g., richly decorated buildings, colourful fish, crabs, and the rocky shore in the river. Furthermore, some other scenes in the narthex are developed narratively with the inclusion of episodes that precede or follow the main theme, as was common for Byzantine art in the fourteenth century. The best example of a narrative in iconography, with a depiction of several individual episodes, is the return of Jacob from Mesopotamia in the southern half-cylinder of the southern arch (Fig. 25). The representation includes aquatic activities: some of Jacob's children are taking off their shirts, while others are entering the river or already swimming. Their red shirts are hung on the trees. The composition to a significant degree recalls representations of the baptism from the Old Metropolis in Veria,¹⁷ the Hodegetria (Afentiko) in Mystras,¹⁸ or Gračanica,¹⁹ which are excellent examples of the new Palaiologan style of wall paintings that begins to expand through the Balkans and the Mediterranean during the fourteenth century.

There is no doubt that all these iconographic and stylistic features of the cycle from Jacob's life are of great interest for the study of the development of iconography and style in the fourteenth-century Balkans. For that reason, in this chapter, special attention will be paid to the interpretation of this unique cycle in Byzantine art.

As is well-known, since the early Christian period, many Old Testament events and personalities were used as prefigurations or types of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. This approach to the Bible can be found in patristic texts and church hymns, as well as in works of art, especially wall paintings. For instance, Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder in patristic exegesis is interpreted as a prefiguration of Mary connecting earth and heaven through her role in the incarnation.²⁰ The other three very popular types with a direct Mariological association were Jacob's

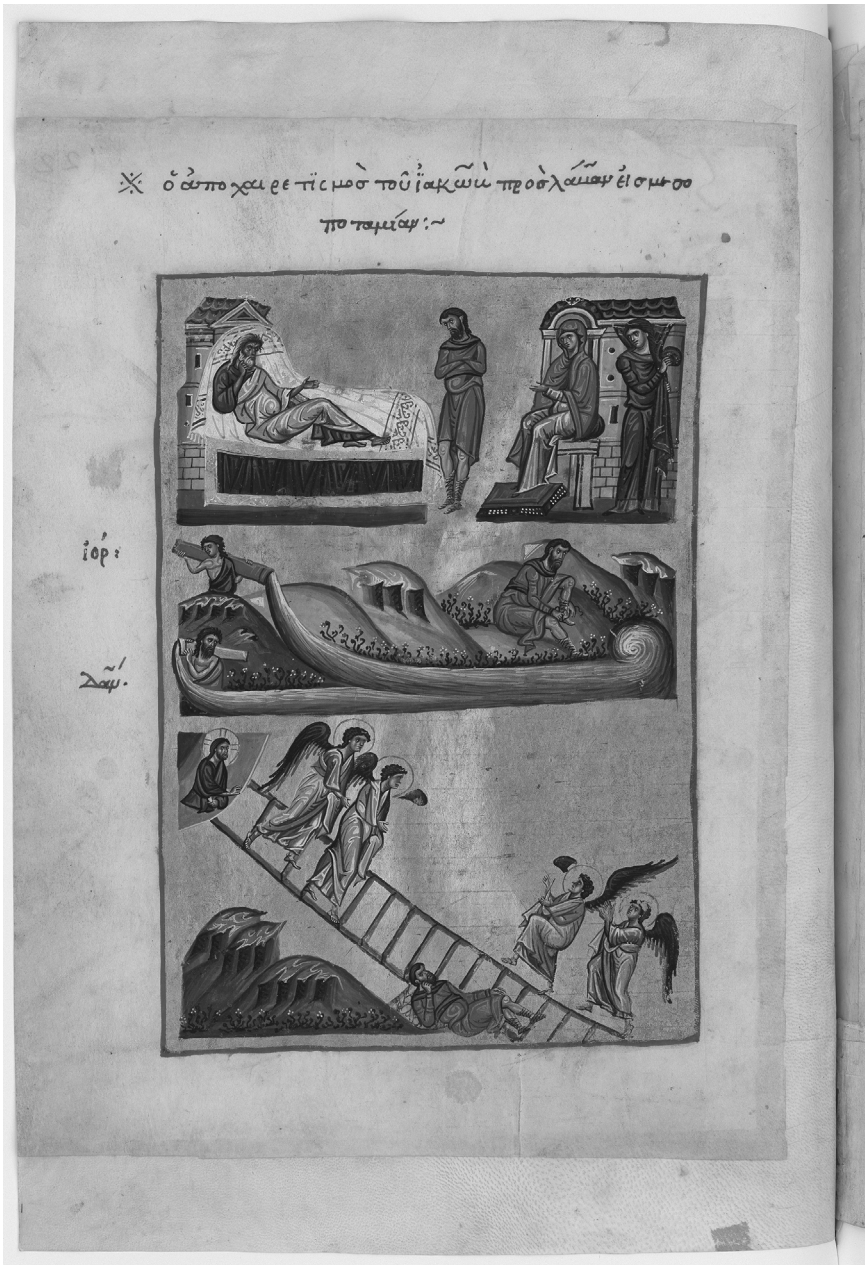


Fig. 27 Vat. Gr. 1162, fol. 22v. Jacob greets his parents before departing for Mesopotamia, crosses the Jordan, dreams of the heavenly ladder

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wrestling with an angel and Moses' burning bush. In the narthex of Ag. Theodora, representations of these two events are preserved as well. The last scene from Jacob's cycle, the wrestling with an angel, is depicted in the barrel vault of the western wall below the lunette of the door (Fig. 26), while in the lunette is Moses on Mount Horeb (Fig. 28). These two events also resemble certain illuminations from Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 22v and Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 29v.

The cycle of the Virgin Mary existed in the same space of the southern barrel vault of the narthex of Ag. Theodora: the farewell of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, and two other representations are very damaged today (Fig. I-8). Furthermore, in the dome of the narthex, above Moses on Mount Horeb, Jesus Christ is depicted as the Ancient of Days surrounded by Old Testament prophets with inscribed scrolls (Fig. I-5). The prophets of the Old Testament and their visions pre-announced the mystery of the incarnation and Christ's mission in the world. Hence, in the narthex of Ag. Theodora, a very complex and theological concept is represented, which includes events from the Old Testament with Christological and Mariological connotations. In the northern barrel vault of the narthex are events from the New Testament: the calling of the apostles, the mission of the apostles, Christ and the Samaritan woman, and the wedding at Cana (Fig. I-7).

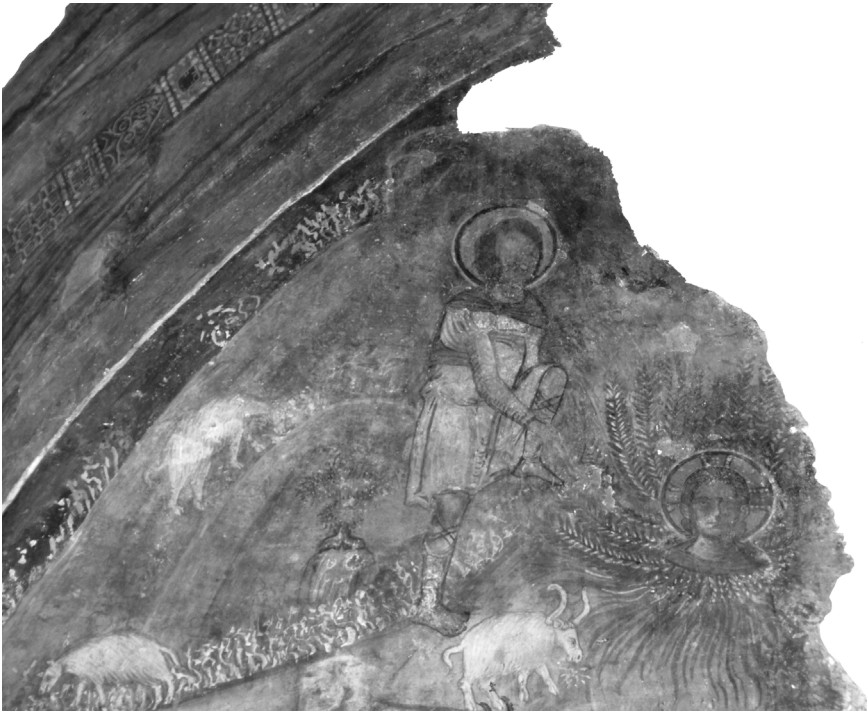


Fig. 28 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, Moses and the burning bush
(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

Here, as in the case of the previously discussed wall paintings in the narthex of the Vlacherna church in Arta,²¹ the understanding of the depiction of Jacob's life, and most likely some other parts of the iconographic programme in Ag. Theodora's narthex could also be interpreted in the context of historical events from the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. The central point of this biblical narrative centres on how Jacob inherited birth rights instead of his older brother Esau.²² According to Genesis 27:6–35, Jacob has conspired with his mother to impersonate his older twin brother Esau so that he could obtain his father's blessing. This story was used to provide theological legitimisation of the hereditary power of Byzantine emperors and the rulers of Byzantine satellite states. Thus, for example, Stefan Nemanja (1166–1196), the founder of the Serbian Nemanjić dynasty, in the foundation document of the Hilandar monastery, mentions that after the concession of power to his second-born son, Stefan the First Crowned, he blessed him 'with every blessing, as Isaac blessed his son Jacob'. His son and biographer St Sava repeats the blessing adding the word 'unconventionally', meaning that according to the hereditary right the throne ought to have passed to Stefan's Nemanja first-born son Vukan: 'And crowned him (i.e., Stefan the First Crowned) and blessed him *unconventionally*, as Isaac blessed Jacob, his son, with every blessing'.²³ Also, when Sava describes the translation of the relics of Stefan Nemanja from Hilandar to Studenica, he compares his brothers Stefan and Vukan with Joseph as well.²⁴ As mentioned earlier, the life of Joseph in Sopoćani and Lesnovo has been seen in the context of these historical events.²⁵ Furthermore, Grabar and Der Nersessian refer to the existence of a direct link with imperial iconography at the depictions of Joseph's story in the manuscript Paris. gr. 510, fol. 69v.²⁶ In this miniature at the end of the story, Joseph is represented with a crown and is dressed as a Byzantine emperor. He holds the globe and labarum, while people surround him in *proskynesis*. In biblical commentaries, Joseph has been interpreted as an antitype of Christ since the third century but also as an ideal bishop, ruler, or high civil servant.²⁷

As we have seen, it was very common for church and political leaders in the Byzantine world, including Epirus, to use biblical figures and events when they wished to allude to an ideal ruler.²⁸ The reason for the inclusion of the extended cycle of the life of Jacob could be seen as an intention to parallel and theologically legitimise the political choices of the regent Anna Palaiologina and her juvenile son despot Thomas I Komnenos Doukas. According to the biblical narrative, the Lord said to Jacob,

I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

(Gen 28:13–15)

The wedding contract between Anna's daughter Thamar and the son of Charles of Anjou, Philip of Taranto, contained an article about the succession.²⁹ Epirus was a source of the feud between Anna and Nikephoros until his death when it was supposed to pass power to their daughter Thamar and her husband Phillip, who would rule as despot. In case Thamar's younger brother, Thomas, outlived his father, then he would have been the despot of Epirus but under the suzerainty of Phillip. Epirus was now more than ever before subjugated to the kingdom of Naples. If we bear in mind the biblical narrative about Jacob, it is possible to observe that similarly to Rebecca, who tricked Isaac so that Jacob could receive the blessing, Anna also tried to be a dynamic agent of her son Thomas, using her regency to secure his rule instead of that of Thamar. Anna could be paralleled to Rebecca, who had a significant place in the story about Jacob, as did Anna in the history of Epirus.

A similar approach to the biblical narrative of Jacob is not unknown among scholars. M. Evangelatou in her analysis of the miniatures from the Kokkinobaphos manuscript, which was intended for the private use and instruction of Irene the sebastokratorissa, sister-in-law of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1142–1180), attempts to apply the meaning of these miniatures to female protagonists, and especially to ideals of motherhood. Her interpretation of *The farewell of Jacob from his father Isaac* from the Kokkinobaphos manuscript emphasises Rebecca's role as an 'exemplary mother'. 'Rebecca was the person who initiated Jacob's transformation into a patriarch and Christ's forefather. Rebecca is likened to the ultimate protector mediator, the Virgin Mary, a prominent symbol and embodiment of the Church'.³⁰ Hence, Rebecca is at the same time a prefiguration of Mary and the church. Through this kind of interpretation of miniatures from the Kokkinobaphos manuscript, Evangelatou sees Irene the sebastokratorissa's wish to identify herself with Mary as an empowering female symbol and an ideal of motherhood.

The previous interpretation of the Kokkinobaphos' manuscript could be also applied to the narthex of St Theodora. As already discussed in the second chapter, the cult of the Mother of God transferred from Constantinople was very developed in Epirus, and Anna also had her role in spreading it even further.³¹ Moreover, it seems that the creator of the iconographic programme of the southern barrel vault of the narthex of St Theodora was especially interested in female sainthood. Along with the Mariological prefigurations and her iconographical cycle, in the lowest register of the southern wall, just below the cycle of Jacob, three full-length female saints are depicted (Fig. 29). They can be identified as St Kyriaki on the right wearing an omophorion-like vestment with figures of six female saints with the names of the other days of the week, and next to her is St Marina. The third one, which scholarship has been unable to identify, could actually be St Theodora of Arta. The partly preserved inscription with her name points to this conclusion. Furthermore, she wears royal attire and resembles portraits of St Theodora from post-Byzantine art.³² In addition, the marble sarcophagus, on which Anna and her son Thomas are most likely represented, is also located in this part of the narthex (Fig. 32).³³



Fig. 29 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, St Kyriaki, St Marina, and St Theodora (?)
(photo: Georgios Fousteris)

Apart from the cycle of Jacob, certain other scenes from the narthex of St Theodora could also have some political and ideological connotations. At the lower register of the western wall of the southern barrel vault, under the life of Jacob, a representation of the collective suffering of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste is preserved; they are in a frozen lake with a half-length figure of Christ, who blesses them and sends wreaths as rewards for their martyrdom (Fig. I-6). The cult of the Forty Martyrs and their depiction was already common in the broader region, as their representation in the church of St Sophia in Ohrid from the eleventh century testifies.³⁴ The cult of these martyrs, including their representations, was especially widespread from the thirteenth century in Serbia, as, for instance, in Studenica, Žiča, Mileševa, Morača, Sopoćani, and Gradac.³⁵ However, they were not always depicted in the frozen lake but as individual figures. As has already been mentioned, the iconography and style of some Epirote churches share many similarities with Serbian monuments. The depiction of the Forty Martyrs can be interpreted in multiple ways. Foremost, the scene has been connected to the baptismal symbolism. It has often been painted in the lower zones of the church (e.g., at Gradac). At the same time, as this depiction is commonly found close to the entrance, it can also indicate the sacrament of baptism as ‘entering’ the church, i.e., the community of the faithful, as well as a symbol of strength and steadfastness in faith. Vojislav Djurić studied the example from Žiča and proved that this specific representation is connected with the ideology of the Serbian rulers. The subject matter of the office of the Forty Martyrs makes an allusion to living rulers. Emperors and rulers must always remember that their power and rule are granted

by God. In the hymnographic kanon to the Forty Martyrs it is taken for granted that hope to achieve victories in battles needs to be rested in their help: 'Intercede with the Trinity to give victories to the Christ-loving emperor'.³⁶ The coronation of the saints by Jesus Christ as a reward for the faith they showed is here interpreted as a prefiguration of the coronation of a ruler or consecration of a bishop or abbot. Hence, when seen in this context, the representation of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (Fig. I-6) in the narthex of Ag. Theodora amplifies the aforesaid interpretation of the cycle of patriarch Jacob. Depicted in the lower register, it faces the marble sarcophagus on which Anna and her son Thomas are represented. This fact additionally strengthens the hypothesis that the representation of the Forty Martyrs is related to the coronation of a ruler. The iconographic programme of the southern barrel vault, where the sarcophagus is placed, includes the cycle of Jacob; the representation of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste; three female saints, including St Theodora; and angels in imperial attires. All this could refer to the ideological and historical context of the preservation of the rule of the regent Anna in Epirus, as well as the safeguarding of the Byzantine identity of the region.

In the iconographic programme of the narthex of Ag. Theodora, there is another scene, which is not seen elsewhere in the wall paintings of thirteenth-century Epirus. The scene is the vision of St Peter of Alexandria (Fig. 30) depicted under the barrel vault of the western wall, just below the scene of Moses and the burning bush (Fig. 28). The origin of this scene is found in illuminated manuscripts from the end of the tenth century, like the famous Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613) and Paris, gr. 580.³⁷ It, however, started to appear more frequently in Byzantine wall paintings from the beginning of the thirteenth century. The oldest preserved is in the church of St Nicholas in Melnik, Bulgaria (around 1200).³⁸

The iconography of the representation of the vision of St Peter of Alexandria (Fig. 30) follows the story from his *Life and Passion*.³⁹ Christ as a 12-year-old boy



Fig. 30 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, vision of St Peter of Alexandria (photo: Georgios Fouteris)

appears to St Peter when he was in prison. Peter is presented as a bishop celebrating the eucharist, and Christ usually stands on the altar wearing a garment torn from head to foot. At the bottom of the scene, close to Peter's legs or under the altar, Arius is depicted in proskynesis. According to the *Life of St Peter*, when he asked Christ who tore his garment, the latter answered that it was Arius. Throughout history, the motif of Christ's torn garment became a metaphor for schisms and for the Arian misinterpretation of the Trinity.

In the narthex of Ag. Theodora, only the top part of the vision of St Peter of Alexandria is preserved: the head of St Peter and a standing Jesus who is pointing with his right hand towards St Peter while holding his clothes with his left (Fig. 30). There are no architectural buildings behind Christ or other ornaments. The placement of this representation above the main entrance is quite unusual. S. Koukariis provides an extensive list with preserved examples of this scene, dated from the early thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and examines the conditions under which this representation was developed.⁴⁰ The scene is located near or within the sanctuary, in the area of the prothesis,⁴¹ but it can also be in the narthex or the western part of the church, as in the church of St Archangel in Prilep⁴² and St Achileios in Arilje.⁴³ When depicted in the narthex, it serves as a complement to the scene of the First Ecumenical Council as, for example, in Mystras and Arilje.

The vision of St Peter points to the Arian heresy and the debates within the church that lasted for several centuries. The church's struggle against doctrines regarded as 'heresies' was also expressed in visual art. The reason behind including the vision into the narthex of Ag. Theodora could be of a doctrinal character,⁴⁴ as the scene could be depicted to strengthen the faith of the Orthodox clergy and people who were under constant pressure from the Latins to convert to Roman Catholicism. We should have in mind that the latter sought to take over parts of Epirus in every way possible. If Epirus under the reign of Anna and Thomas had fallen into the hands of Philip, this would undoubtedly have had an impact on Orthodoxy as well. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the vision of St Peter of Alexandria is frequently depicted in Greece and especially in the areas where the Orthodox coexisted with the Latins and experienced some pressure, such as Crete, Rhodes, and Euboea, especially after the Union of Lyon in 1274.⁴⁵ We know that Anna was the protector of Orthodoxy, and one of the reasons why she was reluctant to hand over power to Philip of Taranto was precisely that Thamar had been forced to abandon her Orthodox faith when she married him.

The rest of the preserved fresco decoration in the narthex of St Theodora includes scenes from the cycle of Christ's miracles and public ministry: the Mission of the apostles, Christ walking on the lake, Christ and the Samaritan woman, the Marriage at Cana (Fig. I-7), the Cleansing of the Temple, and Christ's appearance behind closed doors (*Ειρήνη Ημίν*). The key for understanding the selection and arrangement of these representations could be seen in the context of liturgical function of the space. From the early Christian period, the sacrament of baptism and blessing of the waters were performed in the narthex. These two rituals affected the development of the decoration of this space, especially after

the late thirteenth century.⁴⁶ In this context, it is also possible to see representations from the narthex of St Theodora as the theme of water as an instrument of salvation, which is present in all New Testament scenes except for the Cleansing of the Temple. The water motif is also dominant in the cycle of Jacob discussed earlier. It was also pointed out that the iconographic programme of the narthex of the Vlacherna monastery in Arta was influenced by Constantinopolitan rituals and that Anna may have been involved in its decoration too.

The service of Hagiasmos, which was performed in the narthex, originated in Constantinopolitan churches. It is well-known that in Constantinople there were shrines with natural springs of water called *hagiasma*, which were believed to miraculously cure sick people. Among the best known is the church of St Mary of the Spring (Zoodochos Pege) and the Hagiasma of Blachernae.⁴⁷ In these churches, the service of Hagiasmos was very important. When a church did not have natural springs or additional buildings attached to the church complex, the service of Hagiasmos was performed in the narthex using a phiale or a small basin with water. Various events inspired by Christ's miracles frequently associated with water or events after the resurrection were depicted on the walls of the narthex. Under the influence of the Constantinopolitan ritual, in other parts of the Byzantine world, the service of Hagiasmos was also performed in the narthex or exonarthex, as has been attested by written sources, fonts for the blessing of the waters, or fresco decoration in churches of Mystras⁴⁸ or in Serbia.⁴⁹ This undoubtedly was the case in Epirus as well, where Constantinopolitan liturgical practices were upheld from the early thirteenth century and would not have been missed by the regent Anna who grew up in Constantinople.

The planning and application of such a sophisticated iconographic programme in the narthex of Ag. Theodora with a clear theological, and possibly ideological, meaning, required an educated supervisor, probably someone among the intellectuals who had active participation in the formation of artistic and ideological expressions in the Principality of Epirus. There is no doubt that Anna was surrounded by capable and highly educated people, who lived at her court and in various ways helped her to maintain the independence of Epirus and its Byzantine identity during her regency. She participated in joint donor activities in the town of Mokista in Aetolia with Michael Zorianos and Kosmas Andritzopoulos, as seen in three carved inscriptions presented in the first chapter.⁵⁰

Zorianos presented himself as a general and a high-ranking dignitary, the first officer, *protostrator*, of the despot of Epirus, Thomas, in his short biography written in iambic trimeter in 12 verses in his manuscript Barroci 29, fols 29v-30r, preserved today in Bodleian Library at Oxford.⁵¹ His important position in Epirus is also attested by a golden signet ring (in the Metropolitan Museum of New York) on which is inscribed in reverse: *Seal of Michael Zorianos* (Fig. 31).⁵²

Since the mid-eleventh century, the title *protostrator* was a very important office to the emperors and was conferred on very prominent figures.⁵³ Obviously, Michael Zorianos, holding a very high office in Epirus, supported and promoted the regent Anna Palaiologina and her underage son Thomas I Komnenos Doukas. Michael Zorianos was particularly interested in art since he was widely known for



Fig. 31 Golden signet ring of Michael Zorianos, the Metropolitan Museum, New York
(© The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY/Art Resource)

his learned writings and his patronage that extended all over Epirus, as discussed in the first chapter.⁵⁴

Michael Zorianos could also have been one among those who played an active role in planning the sophisticated decoration of the narthex of St Theodora in Arta. As mentioned earlier, the valued manuscript Barocci 29 decorated with miniatures of the four evangelists was an order of Michael.⁵⁵ It is possible that many other important Byzantine manuscripts existed in Epirus or that painters had first-hand knowledge of the corresponding works based on which they created the iconographic composition of the southern arch in the narthex of Ag. Theodora. The selection of Old Testament scenes with complex symbolism, especially from the cycle of Jacob's and Moses' lives that decorate the narthex, was undoubtedly based on miniatures from Byzantine manuscripts, such as Vat. gr. 1162 and Paris. Gr. 1208, and it required painters or persons with profound theological knowledge.

Another important name related to Anna's ktetoric activities was Kosmas Andritzopoulos, who was a monk or priest. It is obvious that Kosmas came from a prominent family, as he was closely associated with the general and commander-in-chief, Michael Zorianos.⁵⁶ There undoubtedly were other educated people who could have contributed to the creation of this and other iconographic programmes, but the preserved sources are silent about their names.

5.2. The Marble Sarcophagus in the Church of Ag. Theodora

The church of Ag. Theodora also accommodates a tomb, situated to the left of the main entrance to the church, which local tradition identifies with the tomb of St Theodora (Fig. 31). The tomb was made in the nineteenth century from a Byzantine sculpture found in situ and it is considered to be one of the best-preserved examples of the Byzantine monumental tomb.⁵⁷ It is notable for a marble slab decorated with a figural bas-relief showing two archangels with a full-length female figure between them and a small male figure beside her.

Since no inscription has been engraved, the identification of these figures has provoked intense debates among scholars. According to A. Orlandos and M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, the female representation should be identified as St Theodora, while the small male figure represents her husband, the Epirote ruler Michael II Doukas, or their son Nikephoros.⁵⁸ Since the slab bearing the relief forms a section of structure above the grave of St Theodora, this proposal sounds quite plausible. Another feature that helps in identifying the female representation as St Theodora is a veil on the crown hanging down from it on her shoulder, denoting that she died as a nun. The female figure, however, is shown in the full regalia of the Byzantine court, holding in her right hand a sceptre topped with a double cross (Fig. 31), which does not entirely correspond with Theodora, who never held the imperial title. The small figure beside the female portrait is a man also wearing imperial robes, holding a sceptre, and who is crowned with the semi-spherical crown used by Byzantine emperors. If we interpret the figure as Michael II, the question that remains is why he would be represented smaller than St Theodora. The answer to this question can possibly be found in the *Life of St Theodora*, the author of which was a monk Job, who presents Michael as immoral and disrespectful of Theodora. This explanation, however, does not sound entirely convincing.

Despite the fact that many scholars have expressed serious doubts about the identification of the female figure with St Theodora, there are researchers who, following the local tradition, still accept this explanation.⁵⁹ B. Cvetković has proposed a different interpretation and argues that depicted figures could represent Anna Palaiologina Kantakouzene and her underage son Thomas.⁶⁰

The fact that the female figure is carved wearing royal attire corresponds more with Anna, who kept the status of the *basilissa* until her death, than with Theodora, who died as a nun.⁶¹ The female figure represented on the sarcophagus wears a crown with *prependoulia* (hanging ornaments), the form of which matches the shape of the pearls and jewels elsewhere on her vestment. Due to the carving technique, on many preserved examples, *prependoulia* resemble a veil more than vertically hanging pearls and jewels.⁶²

V. Papadopoulou and M. Acheimastou-Potamianou in their recent studies reopened the question of the identification of the female figure but only to reaffirm their previous position; namely, the female figure engraved on the marble slab is St Theodora. To support their argument, they use the painted portrait of Anna Palaiologina from the Pantanassa church near Filippiada, pointing to the lack of

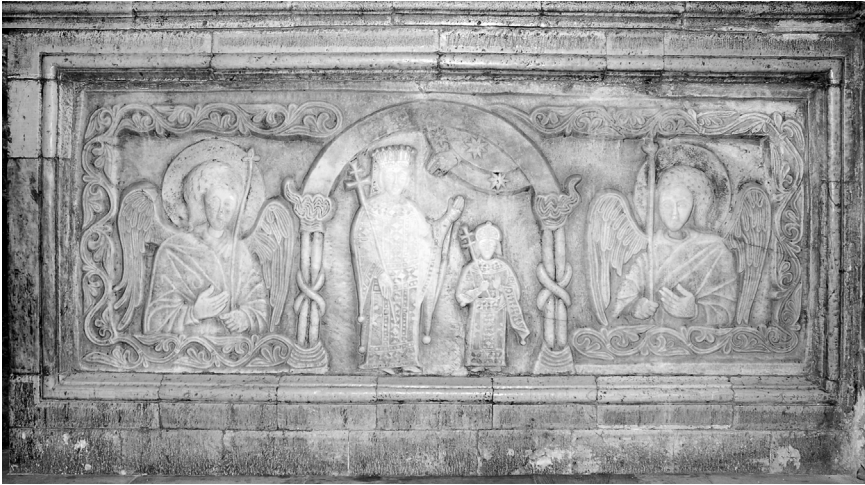


Fig. 32 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, slab of the pseudo-sarcophagus
(photo: Georgios Foustieris)

similarity with the female figure from the sarcophagus in Arta.⁶³ However, it is not easy to make any comparison between these two representations, as the face of Anna from Pantanassa is almost completely destroyed. Furthermore, it is also difficult to compare the crowns with *prependoulia* in these two representations since two different techniques are applied, as demonstrated by Cvetković. Hence, that approach is less than fruitful.

As seen in the preceding discussion, all the analysed iconographic features confirm the assumption that St. Theodora was probably not the person represented on this marble slab. Instead, the image of the boy carved on the sarcophagus corresponds to the age of Anna's son, Thomas. Hence, when seen inside the historical context, this representation can be interpreted as Anna's promotion of her son and claiming his rights to the throne with the support of St Theodora's relics. The female figure raises her left hand to the starry sky from which God's hand blesses and, in this way, supports Anna's new function as regent. Although angels are frequently represented in sculptures and on small objects, murals, etc., the choice of showing them in a posture of worship on both sides of the worldly figures in this particular case can also be linked to the protective role of angels for the Palaiologos family, especially since Anna emphasised her origin from this imperial dynasty. From the moment of Anna's arrival in Epirus and her marriage to Nikephoros, she served the interests of the Palaiologos court and emulated Constantinopolitan art, customs, and rituals. For example, she wore clothes decorated with double-headed eagles, as confirmed by the fresco from Pantanassa.

The marble slab dates to the period when the narthex was added, probably after 1296, when this memorial was erected over the tomb of the new dynastic saint.

It was not unknown for the rulers to be portrayed on art objects to support their claims to legitimacy. The tomb in question is situated in the southern part of the narthex, which is decorated with frescoes depicting a unique cycle of the life of Jacob and with other interesting themes discussed earlier, which clearly bear an ideological message. All this perfectly corresponds to dynastic crises in Epirus at the end of the fourteenth century.

5.3. Thomas' Independent Rule, 1303–1318

When Thomas assumed power after the death of his mother Anna, he behaved as a Byzantine type of independent ruler. Imitating Byzantine emperors, in 1303, he issued an act in which he addressed the privileges of his subjects. Thomas also called this document a chrysobull, even though he had no right to issue documents of this type since he was not an emperor but a despot.⁶⁴ In his signature, Thomas follows in the footsteps of his ancestors from the first half of the thirteenth century by calling himself 'Komnenos Doukas'. In addition to referring to his Komnenos Doukas ancestors, Thomas also emphasises his relationship, through his mother Anna, with the Palaiologoi. Furthermore, in 1307, he married the daughter of Michael IX Palaiologos⁶⁵ and received the title of 'despot' from Andronikos II, thus strengthening his ties with the house of Palaiologos.⁶⁶ On a gold seal of despot Thomas (Fig. 33), today preserved in the British Museum, Thomas is depicted as an emperor, wearing imperial regalia and holding the symbols of imperial power—namely, the sceptre in his right hand and the acacia in his left, accompanied by the following inscription: ΠΙΧ (ΧΙΡ?) ΚΙΡΙΟΥ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΓΟΝΟΥ/ΣΦΡΑΓΙΣΜΑ ΘΩΜΑ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΟΥ (=*Ἀγγελολόγου σφράγισμα Θωμᾶ δεσπότης*).⁶⁷ Above despot on the left side, the hand of God is blessing. In this representation, Thomas both appropriates the imperial privilege to use a gold seal and is also depicted wearing full imperial regalia.

The reverse of the seal depicts the archangel Michael dressed in imperial regalia as well. The association of angels with emperors was very common in the Byzantine world as attested in art and imperial encomia.⁶⁸ Emperors stressed the protective role of the archangel Michael who was considered as the royal patron of both the Palaiologos family and the Komnenos Doukas rulers of Epirus. As discussed in the previous chapters, the figure of the archangel Michael was first introduced in seals of Michael I Komnenos Doukas. The following generations of Komnenos Doukas rulers in Epirus, including Theodore, Manuel, John, and Michael II, chose their representation with Archangel Michael on their coins. They are depicted crowned and blessed by Archangel Michael, which further confirms the idea of heavenly protection bestowed to rulers.⁶⁹

Representations of the archangels were especially frequent on the wall paintings of the second half of the thirteenth century in Epirus. For example, Archangels Michael and Gabriel are respectively depicted in the prothesis and the diakonikon of the church of Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias. Angels are also depicted in the rare representation of *Stauroproskynesis* (veneration of the holy cross by angels) in Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias (Fig. 14)⁷⁰ and in the scene of the Exaltation of



Fig. 33 Gold seal of despot Thomas, British Museum, London

(© The British Museum, London)

the Holy Cross in the Church of the Holy Fathers in Varassova (Fig. X-1).⁷¹ Furthermore, two large figures of angels in imperial costumes are praying on either side of the Ancient of Days in Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos.⁷² In the church of Porta Panagia, which is connected with John Komnenos Doukas, on the well-known funerary representation, an angel, apparently Michael, leads the monk to the Virgin Mary.⁷³ Regardless of whether in this particular monastic figure we should see sebastokrator John or an unknown abbot donor of the monastery of Porta Panagia, it shows special honour given to the archangel Michael.⁷⁴

Before the end of the thirteenth century, however, no church seems to have been dedicated to the archangel Michael or archangels in Epirus. Their more frequent depiction began during the reign of Nikephoros (1267/1268–1296) and reaches its

apogee during the reign of his successor Thomas in the early fourteenth century. The intense cult of archangels will continue in Epirus in the following centuries. For example, in all the churches in Ioannina, homage and respect for Archangel Michael are cultivated. His icons are placed in prominent positions, and he is also the patron saint of the city.

More frequent depiction of archangels from the end of the thirteenth century can be directly related to the political situation in Epirus at that time. There is no doubt that Anna Palaiologina contributed to the revival of the cult of the archangels in Epirus by transmitting to the Komnenos Doukas family state the habits and perceptions of the Palaiologoi. We know from written sources that the Palaiologoi paid great honour and respect to the archangel Michael. According to Pachymeres, Emperor Michael XVIII Palaiologos (1261–1282) erected a column in front of the church of the Holy Apostles and placed a bronze statue of his protector, Archangel Michael, on top of it. The emperor also placed his own statue showing himself offering a model of Constantinople to the archangel on the same base. The statue was destroyed in the earthquake of 1296 but was renovated by his successor Andronikos II (1282–1328).⁷⁵ Moreover, Michael VIII and Andronikos II choose representations of the archangel on both his coins seals.⁷⁶ The reverence that both emperors paid to their protector, the archangel Michael, can be seen in their artistic patronage, even in the areas far from Constantinople, such as in St Nicholas Perhondi⁷⁷ and in the church of the Holy Trinity in Berat, Albania.⁷⁸ On Kythira, in the church of Ag. Georgios in Dourianika, where the foundation inscription of Michael VIII Palaiologos dated to 1275 is located in a prominent position on the south wall next to the Deisis, a full-body image of Archangel Michael in imperial attire is preserved.⁷⁹

During the same period, the first churches dedicated to the Taxiarches appear in Epirus: in Kostaniani near Dodoni,⁸⁰ in Mokista in Aitoloakarnania,⁸¹ and in the southeastern citadel of the castle in Ioannina where the metropolitan church was dedicated to the Taxiarch Michael.⁸² Unfortunately, it is not known who was the founder of the aforementioned church Kostaniani near Dodoni, dedicated to the Taxiarch Michael, with almost fully preserved fresco decoration, nor of other churches in Epirus and Aitoloakarnania dated to the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁸³

The iconographic programme of the church of Panagia Vellas is in line with this spiritual climate. Specifically, on the western wall of the nave, in the arched drums of the western corner compartments, two angels are represented in supernatural size—something that has not been recognised before—obviously Michael and Gabriel. In the southern drum, most of the figure is preserved, while in the northern one the mural has collapsed almost completely. Both angels are frontal with large open wings. The angel on the southern side is depicted in military attire. It is common in Byzantine monumental paintings to depict archangels next to the western entrance, to serve as guardians of the church. Given that the patron of the church of Panagia Vellas was the prostrator Theodore Tzimiskes, the choice of two supernaturally sized angels in military uniform near the patron saint's

inscription must simultaneously express their military and ritual character as official guards.⁸⁴ The role of the mediator is appropriate for the angels and especially for the archangel Michael since the archangel was regarded as the psychopomp and helper of people at the time of death. In the Molyvdoskepasti church, at the western entrance to the church, there is a representation of Archangel Michael, marked with the inscription ΦΥΛΑΞ.⁸⁵

Similar examples of images of Archangel Michael being placed next to a church entrance is preserved in the church of the Virgin Mary in Cerskë near Leskovik in southern Albania,⁸⁶ and in the narthex of St Theodora in Arta, left of the southern entrance (Fig. I-4). The second example merits attention, as it is placed close to the sarcophagus above St Theodora's grave where two other angels with imperial attire flank two rulers (Fig. 32).

Also, worth mentioning is a marble slab, probably added later, towards the end of the thirteenth century, with the representation of Archangel Michael as a warrior that today blocks one of the outer windows on the southern side of the Vlacherna monastery in Arta (Fig. 34). According to Papadopoulou, this icon should be dated to the end of the thirteenth century, to the same period as the marble decoration of Parigoritissa, and not to the sixteenth/seventeenth century, as suggested by A. Orlandos.⁸⁷

The association of Thomas with the archangel except for his seal mentioned previously is also found in a list of Greek lords compiled in 1313, in which Thomas is named, among others, *Archang(eli) Dominus*, where the word *Archang(eli)* may denote the castle that is known as Thomokastro, probably built by Thomas himself in the village of Riza Reniasa on the coast north of Preveza.⁸⁸ The fortress is mentioned for the first time in the *History* of Kantakouzenos, and it is related to the rebellion of the Epirotes in 1338 against the then emperor of Constantinople, Andronikos III.⁸⁹ However, this fortress was built earlier, probably at the end of the thirteenth or the very beginning of the fourteenth centuries, when the Epirotes were left without any allies. From a strategic point of view, it has an excellent position because it is situated on the road that leads from Albania to southern Greece and connects the ancient city of Nikopolis with Thesprotia. In addition, it was possible to control sea routes between Italy and the Ionian Islands from there. After Thomas' mother Anna refused to hand over Epirus to her son-in-law Philip of Taranto, he invaded Epirus twice. 'Thomokastro' could clearly have played an important role in the despot's efforts to protect his territory. Thomas was not only very successful in preserving Epirus' sovereignty during the first Angevine's invasion in 1304–1305, but he also managed to expand his territory to both the north and the south by recovering Butrinto in Albania and Nafpaktos in the Aitolokarania (Fig. 2). Nevertheless, Philip's second invasion in 1307 ended with a compromise, the terms of which allowed Philip to take the fortresses that belonged to him according to Thamar's dowry.

Epirus found itself increasingly inside the orbit of Byzantine influence until this was interrupted by a private disagreement between Epirote and Byzantine commanders. This started a new war in 1315, during which the Byzantines, under the



Fig. 34 Arta, Vlacherna monastery, façade, southside, Marble icon with Archangel Michael (photo: author)

leadership of Syrgiannis Palaiologos, occupied Ioannina. The Byzantines reached as far as Arta, at which point Thomas incarcerated his wife and began negotiations with Philip of Taranto. In 1318, however, before Epirus and Angevins could form another alliance, Nicholas Orsini, Count of Cephalonia, murdered Thomas, thus ending the rule of the Komnenos Doukas family.

Notes

- 1 See p. 113–114; Nicol, 1984, 46–49.
- 2 The marriage contracts of Thamar are analytically referred to in the *Chronicle of Morea* (Schmitt), pp. 262–233. See also Chapter 4, p. 113.
- 3 Nicol, 1984, 56–57.
- 4 Ibid., 50–61.
- 5 Patlagean, 1995, 445–459.
- 6 See cat. n. I.
- 7 Nersessian, 1975, 349; Eastmond, 2004, 68–70.
- 8 For full decoration of the narthex, see Fig. I-4.
- 9 See Chapter 2, p. 53.
- 10 See p. 135.
- 11 ‘Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you’ (Gen 31:3).
- 12 According to the biblical story, Jacob crossed the river Jabbok, not Jordan (Gen. 32:22).
- 13 Eastmond, 2004, Fig. 40.68.
- 14 Nersessian, 1975, 335, Fig. 2.
- 15 Lowden, 1992; Weitzmann and Bernabò, 1999, vol. 1, 94–110 and vol. 2, Figs. 355–440; Linardou, 2004; Evangelatou, 2015.
- 16 For a description of the miniature with earlier bibliography, see Linardou, 2004, 35–41; Evangelatou, Fig. 5.
- 17 Papazotos, 1994, pin. 14; Mouriki, 1983, 471–473, Fig. 6,
- 18 Mouriki, 1983.
- 19 Todić, 1998, ph. 121.
- 20 Pentiuc, 2014, 233–235.
- 21 See Chapter 4, pp. 104–110.
- 22 Gen. 25, 20–22.
- 23 Sveti Sava (Bogdanović), vol. 2, 102.
- 24 Ibid., 117.
- 25 Ljubinković, 1967; Gavrilović, 1980; Marjanović-Dušanić, 1997, 210–216. Based on its location between the Tree of Jesse and the Last Judgement, Branislav Todić, on the other hand, emphasises the didactic and especially Christological meaning of the Joseph cycle in Sopoćani. Todić, 1995, 95.
- 26 Nersessian, 1962, 223–224; Grabar, 1969, 134.
- 27 Nersessian, 1962., Fig. 18; Todić, 1995.
- 28 See p. 54.
- 29 Nicol, 1984, 47–48.
- 30 Evangelatou, 2015, 188.
- 31 See either Anna’s donor portraits with the Virgin Mary in the Pantanassa monastery (p. 111, Fig. 19) or the depiction of the icon of the Hodegetria’s litany in the Vlacherna Church in Arta (p. Fig. 18a).
- 32 Giannoulis, 2001.
- 33 See catalogue I, Fig. I-4.
- 34 This is the oldest and most elaborate cycle of these martyrs depicted in prothesis, to whom this section of the church was dedicated. Grozdanov, 1990, 42–45, draw 3–5; Babić, 1969, 117–121; Pavlović, 2009, 296–297, Fig. 5.
- 35 Pavlović, 2009.
- 36 Djurić, 2000, 123–144.
- 37 Millet, 1930, 103–107.
- 38 Akrafova-Zhandova, 1946; Mavrodinova, 1975, 24–26, il. 19–20.
- 39 Devos, 1965, 166
- 40 Koukias, 2011, 63–68
- 41 Ibid., 65–69.

- 42 In the church of St Archangel Michael in Prilep, the vision of St Peter of Alexandria is depicted in the lowest register of the north wall in the western part of the church. See Cvetkovski, 2012, 83–87.
- 43 Vojvodić, 2005, 103–104, 143–144, 298, draw 44.
- 44 Grozdanov, 1980, 74–75.
- 45 Koukiaris, 2011, 68–69.
- 46 Etzeoglou, 2013, 162–174; Drpić, 2002.
- 47 For sources and bibliography, see Etzeoglou, 2013, 172, n. 735.
- 48 Etzeoglou, 2013, 171.
- 49 Kandić, 1998–1999, 61–78; Drpić, 2002, 119–120.
- 50 See Chapter 1, p. 34.
- 51 *PLP*, 3, 6666; Nicol, 1984, 242, 247.
- 52 Evans, Holcomb and Hallman, 2001, 54; Evans, 2004, 46, n. 16.
- 53 Rodolphe, 1967, 46, 481. In addition to Michael Zorianos, we know of only one other official who held this title, and that was Theodore Tzimiskes. See p. 38.
- 54 Lambros, 1906, 474–476.
- 55 Carr, 1992.
- 56 Lambros, 1906, 474–476; *PLP* 1, n. 940.
- 57 Orlandos, 1936g, 105–115; Pazaras, 1988, 42, Fig. 36γ-δ, 37; Papadopoulou, 2015a, 131, Fig. 113; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2017; Cvetković, 2018, 55–58, nn. 41–89 with extensive bibliography.
- 58 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2017.
- 59 For identification and an analytic bibliography related to St Theodora's tomb, see Cvetković, 2018, 55–58.
- 60 Cvetković, 1994, 103–112. This new proposal has been started to be accepted among scholars. See Drewer, 1996, 33, 62; Melvani, 2013, 32, 56, 65, 105, 127, 136, 149, 187, 198, 249, Fig. 51.
- 61 Cvetković, 1994, 103–112, 2011, 405–414.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 2018, 61, Fig. 6.
- 63 Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2017, 280.
- 64 This document is preserved in a Latin translation. See Lemerle, 1951, 389–396; Maksimović, 1994, 129, n. 15.
- 65 Nicol, 1984, 75; Maksimović, 1994, 129.
- 66 Thomas's father Nikephoros was the first leader of Epirus, who visited Constantinople, where he received the title of 'despot', see p. 6.
- 67 Buckton, 1994, n. 214, 198–199; Nesbitt, 2004, 35–36.
- 68 Maguire, 1990, 222–224, 1995, esp. 65.
- 69 See p. 73–74, 77, Fig. 12a and b.
- 70 See pp. 89–91.
- 71 *Ibid.*
- 72 According to Paliouras the cave church of Ag. Nikolaos Kremastos, outside of the cave and south of the entrance, one rock painting of archangel Gabriel can be seen, with the wish—inscription, which according to him can be dated to the thirteenth century. See Paliouras, 1985, 194.
- 73 The monk from the Porta Panagia has been identified as sebastokrator John I Doukas. The sources, at least as far as we know, do not confirm that sebastokrator John became a monk. For sebasokrator John and his family, see Ostrogorski, 1996, 428; Ferjančić, 1968, 181–182, 1974, 95–126. Chatzidakis' view on the representation in the Porta-Panagia was that 'the identity of the depicted prominent dead man remains problematic' (Chatzidakis, 1967, 25). Moreover, the stylistic features of the funerary representation are very different from other frescoes in the sanctuary that date back to the time of sebastokrator John I Doukas, i.e., the end of the thirteenth century. See Orlandos, 1935, 33–35, Fig. 22, 23; Chatzidakis, 1967, 24–25, 37a, β; Tsitouridou,

- 1981, II, 876–877, Fig. 9; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 31, 99, Figs. 85, 86; Papamastorakis, 1996–1997, 294–295, Fig. 8; Brooks, 2002, 9, 38, 107, 114, 115, 119, 140, 375–378, Fig. 13, 2006, 234, Figs. 5 and 6; Semoglou, 2003, 83.
- 74 The archangel Michael is not found in many funerary representations in Byzantine art. In Epirus, the northern chapel of the Parigoritissa's katholikon is dedicated to him, where a votive representation of Michael together with the church's fifteenth century founders can be seen. See Giannoulis, 2003, 123–152 and Giannoulis, 2010, 342–351.
- 75 Pachymeres IX, 15; Nelson, 2004, 38.
- 76 Grierson, 1999, 80; Zacos and Vegler, 1972, I, 3, 1581–1583, v. 2757.
- 77 In the exonarthex, in the lower register of the northern wall, under the pair of full-length, frontal imperial portraits that A. Christidou has identified with Andronikos II Palaiologos and Irene/Yolanda, a large image of archangel Michael is represented. See Christidou, 2010, 542, Fig. 5β.
- 78 In the lower zone of the east wall of the narthex, the founding couple is depicted with two military saints and archangel Michael. According to the preserved inscription, one of the images represents Andronikos II Palaiologos. See Christidou, 2010, Figs. 10, 11.
- 79 Chatzidakis and Bitha, 1997, 134–141, Fig. 17.
- 80 See cat. n. XXIII
- 81 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 57–59.
- 82 Papadopoulou and Karamperidi, 2006, 148.
- 83 See Chapter 4, pp. 121–122.
- 84 Xyngopoulos, 1933, 18.
- 85 This is a post-Byzantine painting executed over a late-Byzantine fresco.
- 86 The angel is depicted next to the western wall of the entrance. See Kirchhainer, 2004, 93, abb. 4.
- 87 Papadopoulou, 2015d, 100, Fig. 74.
- 88 Nicol, 1984, 80, n. 59, 115, n. 23.
- 89 Kantakouzenos (Schopen), II, 34, 509.

Conclusion

The medieval state of Epirus, established in 1204, had a major role in shaping a new geopolitical reality in the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade and throughout the thirteenth century. Had Theodore not made one fatal error at Klokotnitsa in 1230 and had the Greek-Latin alliance been upheld on the field of Pelagonia, Epirus and not Nicaea could have re-established the Byzantine Empire. Even after this defeat at Klokotnitsa, when the state of Epirus lost many territories and was weakened, the Komnenos Doukas rulers retained an antagonistic stance towards Nicaea and managed to maintain their independence.

The preceding chapters explored artistic production in the medieval state of Epirus from its formation in 1204 until 1318 in light of the political orientation of its ruling family, the Komnenos Doukas. The research was based on textual and visual sources, including architectural, iconographic, epigraphic, and numismatic material, as well as select art objects.

The aim of this book was twofold: first, to provide a comprehensive analysis of artistic production in Byzantine Epirus in order to deepen our understanding of the art and cultural history in Epirus, as well as in the wider Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean following the Fourth Crusade. In this context, Epirote artistic production is systematised in detail, including an extensive iconographic examination of 24 churches and the identification or redating of monumental images on their walls. The exploration of the transmission of these specific fresco ensembles and iconographic formulae could provide an additional and important source of information about Epirote society and the political and ecclesiastical factors which affected it. The second aim was to explore the function of patronage in medieval Epirus. Through the examination of artistic production, this volume reveals how the Epirote elite mobilised art and material culture to address the issues of succession and legitimacy, construct memory, stake a claim on Constantinople, and mediate encounters and exchanges with the Latin West. Overall, it elucidates how art contributed to the preservation of Epirus' independence.

1. Artistic Production in Byzantine Epirus

The quality of Epirote artistic production is varied regardless of location and sponsorship. In the first decades of the thirteenth century, the Epirotes reused or rebuilt

some of their previous buildings such as Episkopi at Mastron, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris near Arta, and the Old Metropolis in Veria. The neighbouring regions of southern Greece influenced Epirote architecture, which was already based on the Helladic school. It seems that the churches were built by local masons, who over time developed a distinctive style of building different from those of other contemporary Byzantine centres. This architectural style, sometimes dubbed the 'School of Epirus', is characterised by three-sided apses, exterior pilasters linked by arches, richly articulated window frames made of brick, and stone arches and door and window frames. The high-quality, dark-red bricks had special cuts along the edges forming astragal, kufesque, and other shapes, which constitute unique decorative elements on the facades of Epirote churches. The fresco decoration shows more progressive elements in the northern regions, which were directly influenced by the art of Thessaloniki and the wider region of Macedonia. During the previous centuries, new artistic trends developed and matured in the area. Many of those artistic forms are closer to the customs and perceptions that characterise the advanced trends of twelfth-century painting. Painters chose patterns of classical beauty and tranquil forms lacking tension with well-designed folds.

The region of Aitolokarnania and Nafpaktos must have lacked good progressive painters, as can be deduced from some written sources. The letters of the metropolitan John Apokaukos, mentioned in the first chapter, inform us that in the first decade of the thirteenth century, the cathedral of the diocese of Nafpaktos was painted with gold by the painter Epiphanius from Thebes. Since the said decoration had not been completed and had also suffered much damage from earthquakes and rains, Apokaukos was again looking for painters and sculptors in the years 1218/1219 and 1222. This time he invited a painter Nicholas from Euboea. This information may be indicative of the absence of capable painters from his region. Local workshops in the areas of Nafpaktos and Aitolokarnania probably existed, but Apokaukos was in the market for a high level of decoration for the cathedral, similar to what he experienced in his youth while he was residing in the capital. In addition to local workshops, other painters also worked in the area, as evidenced by the frescoes in the diocese of Evrytania, which was under the direct influence of Thessaloniki. The decoration of the Episkopi at Mastron must have also been the work of artists following progressive trends and not the traditional approaches maintained by local workshops.

The minting activity in Epirus, mainly located in Thessaloniki and Arta, led to the production of many high-quality coins. The coins that bear clear political messages use traditional middle Byzantine patterns. However, one also encounters new exclusive motifs that appear on Epirote coinage as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. They include the depiction of a triple-tower castle on Theodore's and Manuel's coins, a winged emperor on John Doukas's coins, and the archway under which stands the emperor, e.g., John Komnenos Doukas. It seems that Epirotes found inspiration for this in western European coinage.

Epirote art from the middle of the thirteenth century continues the previous tradition enriched with many new elements that are indicative of the art forms that

become prevalent from the fourth decade of the thirteenth century onwards. The architecture of Epirus was still dominated by local influences; however, its characteristic features flourished and developed further. Examples include the introduction of different types of churches, e.g., the single-nave cross-vaulted church of the *Metamorphosi Sotiros* near Galaxeidi or a type of a basilican church with pronounced narrow high transepts (*stavrepistegos naos*) in the Kato Panagia in Arta. The churches were also decorated with more varied brick patterns on the exterior, and donor inscriptions were also rendered using bricks.

Painted cycles are enriched with representations that appear in the first half of the thirteenth century based on the older Komnenian tradition and gradually become established in Palaiologan art, as at Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias. In addition, rare themes are introduced into the iconographic programmes, such as the vision of St Eustathios of Plakida at Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, the Adoration of the Cross by angels at Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, and the Exaltation of the Cross in the cave church of Ag. Pateres in Varassova.

In terms of general style, the painting of the monastery of Vlacherna, the Kato Panagia, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, and the *Metamorphosi Sotiros* in Galaxeidi exhibits similarities with the art referred to by scholars as 'the art of Nicaea'. This represents the art of Constantinople that continued to flourish primarily in Nicaea but in other areas as well. The decoration of the *katholikon* of the Vlacherna monastery bears several similarities with frescoes from Serbia that were executed by experienced painters associated with the artistic circles of Constantinople/Nicaea. This Nicaean art is apparent in churches in various parts of Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, Bulgaria, and on some portable icons from Sinai. Indeed, in terms of execution, the decoration of Vlacherna in some places recalls the frescoes from the refectory of Patmos and Bojana in Bulgaria.

The constant political rivalry between the Empire of Nicaea and Epirus that turned into an open war did not affect the movement of artists between the two states. It is logical that the influence of the imperial art of Constantinople/Nicaea was strong in the western parts of Byzantium. Many artists left Constantinople immediately after 1204 for the independent regions, where the conditions for artistic activity were favourable and where they could engage in artistic activity characterised by new pursuits. The Epirus-Nicaea political relations were restored, albeit temporarily, in the middle of the thirteenth century, and the resulting movements of aristocratic families and their efforts to (re)establish diplomatic and kinship relations were often supported by artistic activities.

The involvement of the Epirote ruler Michael Doukas and his wife Theodora in the construction and decoration of churches contributed to the development of art, as they could afford to invite skilled artists from major art centres. The churches of Kato Panagia and the *Metamorphosi Sotiros* in Galaxeidi were foundations of Michael II. He might have had some involvement in the monastery of Vlacherna in Arta as well. The fact that the painted ensembles in the aforementioned churches were created by different, seemingly unrelated workshops, means that the production of monumental paintings in the region of Epirus should not be associated with a single artistic centre.

Therefore, it appears that the art of Epirus at this time was characterised by the coexistence of progressive and conservative elements. Those elements, enriched by the search for talented painters, defined a new artistic peculiarity more characteristic of later Palaeologan art. In the first stage, a general request for rejuvenation appears, which gradually leads to the abandonment of the artistic standards that were common throughout the Byzantine Empire until 1204. In this sense, the painting of Epirus cannot be characterised as provincial because artists were influenced by new progressive trends of the time.

During the last decades of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, great qualitative changes can be observed in the monumental painting in Epirus, as well as in other Byzantine provinces. At this time, there is an increase in artistic activity in Constantinople and Macedonia as part of the religious policy of Andronikos II. He annulled the decisions of the Council of Lyon (1274) and sought to appear as the guarantor of Orthodoxy and to gain acceptance by the theological circles and monastic centres that had opposed his father's unionist policy. The painting of Epirus is influenced by this artistic efflorescence. In some cases, the artistic activity was to a significant degree in the service of the political and ecclesiastical goals of the time. Furthermore, Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, the wife of Nikephoros, brought many trends from Constantinople and her Palaiologan family, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

During this period, Constantinopolitan features appeared in Epirote architecture, e.g., the type of the four-column cross-in-square church with five domes and porticos and chapels attached to the church as at the monastery of the Pantanassa at Philippiada. It has been suggested that the model for this building was found in Lascarid architecture and more specifically in church E of Sardis.¹ The painters were also aware of the new trends and knew well not only new iconographic themes but also new solutions employed in complex iconographic programmes. Nevertheless, many late-Komenian conservative elements, which survived in the wider area of northern Greece until the beginning of the fourteenth century, still prevail in terms of style. The painting of the workshops that are active in Epirus cannot be directly related to the artistic tradition of the Thessaloniki workshops from the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, as apparent in the Protaton, in the chapel of Ag. Eftymios, and in the Perivleptos church at Ohrid. On the other hand, the mosaics of the Parigoritissa in Arta follow a more advanced style that is directly related to Constantinopolitan works, such as the middle dome of the narthex of the Kilise Camii. The rest of the Epirote wall paintings represent two different but not conflicting artistic currents. The first group includes the Panagia Vellas and the Taxiarches in Kostaniani, which are attributed to the same workshop. These wall paintings, despite the fact that they show very progressive elements that are in line with the newer conceptions in some key points, such as the rendering of the architectural depth, nevertheless exude a stylistic conservatism that refers to the tradition of Komnenian art. Conservative elements also characterise the workshop of the church of Ag. Theodora mainly in terms of the representation of landscape and architectural elements.

The frescoes in the hermitage of Ag. Andreas in the cave of Kalanas outside the village of Chalkiopoulos and in the Panagia in Preventza, while exhibiting some progressive elements, echo the Komnenian tradition and overall exhibit a strong provincial character.

At the same time, the wall decoration of the Pantanassa and the last late Byzantine phase of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris exhibits the renewal and progressive trends that emanate from the powerful artistic centres of the empire. Those centres will have become prevalent from the beginning of the fourteenth century. These two examples testify that painters of very high standards transferred to Epirus the most advanced artistic tendencies of the time. In any case, this is a mature level of painting that could not be developed in the province but only under the influence of important artistic centres such as those in Thessaloniki and Constantinople.

The frescoes of the narthex of the Vlacherna monastery are unquestionably connected with Constantinople, as the representation of the procession of the Hodegetria implies that the painter personally witnessed the depicted ceremony. We are therefore obliged to include this fresco ensemble in the artistic activity of a workshop invited directly from Constantinople on the initiative of the aristocratic circles from the Epirote capital. Nevertheless, in terms of its quality, this work does not meet the high artistic standards of Constantinople. On the contrary, the anonymous artist, despite his narrative ability and the original handling of iconographic themes, while he seems to be aware of the new artistic reality and the developments of the time, shows clear weaknesses in terms of style. His work is characterised by a rather simplistic expression typical of the post-Komenian painting with some elements of renewal.

Evidently, Epirote art adheres to Byzantine traditions, despite some observable connections with southern Italian trends, likely a consequence of the movements of people, goods, and workshops. Some of the characteristic Western features in Epirote architecture are, for example, visible in the architectural sculptures and interior proportions of the Parigoritissa, monumental portals of the Pantanassa, the outer pi-shaped portico added to the church of Ag. Theodora in Arta, and the form of windows in Taxiarches in Mokista and Ag. Ioannis Theologos at Efpalio. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the western influences in the Parigoritissa and in Thamar's wedding gift were the result of Nikephoros' intentional promotion of his western alliances and not (only) the geographical proximity of the two territories. It is also worth mentioning that despite the fact that Epirote rulers forged alliances with their western counterparts, they were never under pressure to convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. This is the likely reason why there are no preserved iconographic representations that refer to liturgical or any other doctrinal issues between the East and the West, as is the case in other parts of Greece. Nevertheless, Epirus and southern Italy were artistically and culturally connected, as seem, for example, in Santa Maria delle Cerrate, St Christina in Carpignano near Lecce, and St Peter in Otranto, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The visual material, coupled with the relevant textual evidence, suggests that, despite its political fragmentation, the Byzantine world of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was in artistic terms remarkably well connected. Epirotes

used the previous middle Byzantine artistic patterns but also introduced novel elements from the local area, which is especially evident in the architecture. Possibly, the donors wanted through their building activities to create something original and different in order to promote the identity of the newly established state of Epirus.

2. The Function of Patronage in Medieval Epirus

Epirus followed the traditional patterns of patronage, where rulers, the local aristocracy, eminent clergymen, bishops, and monks, provided funding for the erection of new edifices and their decoration. In this book, I studied the activities of these groups to understand the motives behind their patronage. Patrons undoubtedly engaged in sponsorship for their personal promotion, including the display of power or social status, as well as because of their concern for their soul's eternal salvation. At the same time, patronage had other functions—namely, to uphold the Byzantine identity of Epirus and contribute to the survival of the Epirote state, which repeatedly faced serious challenges from both western powers and Nicaea.

To better understand Epirote patronage and its society, we can discern five chronological phases: 1204–1215, 1215–1230, 1230–1261, 1261–1296, and 1296–1318. These five phases cover the periods of seven different rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family, i.e., Michael I, Theodore, Manuel, Michael II, and Nikephoros with Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina as co-regent with her son Thomas. It has been shown that all of them, along with people from their social circle, participated in patronage activities within Epirus. As various political, social, or religious circumstances changed, so did the challenges that each ruler faced. Essentially, their changing ambitions influenced the function of their patronage, as summarised in the following section.

During the first phase (1204–1215), Michael I faced many difficulties connected to the formation of the new state. However, the state's territory was expanding and conditions suitable for artistic patronage existed. The Epirote elite consciously modelled their new capital Arta on the former capital Constantinople, emphasising in this way the perseverance of the memory of the imperial capital and the state. Overall, it could be said that patronage and artistic production in this first phase visually articulate ideological responses to the Latin occupation of Constantinople and the experience of exile, as explored in the second chapter. Hence, the principal function of patronage was to establish a Byzantine identity modelled after Constantinople and the traditional Byzantine norms.

Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230) was more ambitious than his predecessor. His aspirations regarding the imperial succession against the rival claims from Nicaea found an eloquent visual expression in several monuments (e.g., Vlacherna monastery in Arta, Old Metropolis in Veria), as testified by the writings of contemporaneous Epirote clergymen. After Theodore captured Thessaloniki towards the end of 1224, he proclaimed himself emperor, envisioning the restoration of the pre-1204 Byzantine Empire. These ambitions can be seen in Theodore's coinage, inscriptions, and most likely also in the iconographic

programme in the church of Ag. Demetrios Katsouris near Arta and the Old Metropolis in Veria.

Following the defeat at Klokotnitsa and Theodore's failure in having Epirus as the force behind the restoration of the Byzantine Empire, Manuel (1230–1237), John (1237–1244), and Michael II (1230–1266) struggled to preserve their own domain and its independence by entering into alliances with both the Westerners and the Nicaeans. Michael II and his wife Theodora's patronage activities are among the best preserved, and they completely adhere to the Byzantine traditions. It seems evident that Michael's aim was primarily to promote his own leadership but also to preserve the Byzantine identity and territorial integrity of the Epirote state. Hence, although he was allied with the Westerners, there are only minimal influences from the West visible in the coinage, church and secular architecture, and iconography of painted ensembles. During this phase, patronage was primarily a function of promoting Michael and Theodora's claims to power, as well as their piety. At the same time, testimonials of important events can also be observed in this activity, e.g., the Panagia tou Bryoni was built as part of conflict resolution between Epirus and the Patriarchate of Nicaea, which was commemorated with inscriptions inside the church. The church was consecrated by the ecumenical patriarch in person.

After the restoration of the Byzantine rule on the Bosphorus in 1261, the Epirote elites continued to promote their Constantinopolitan ascendancy, while simultaneously maintaining their distance from the new Palaiologan regime. This was especially prominent during the rule of Nikephoros (1266–1296), who was forced to serve the interests of the Palaiologan court after his two marriages. In an attempt to liberate himself from the Byzantine court and to preserve Epirus' independence, Nikephoros formed alliances with the Angevins. Those alliances were openly promoted via his patronage activity at the Parigoritissa. At the same time, the local aristocracy adhered fully to the Byzantine tradition and continues the artistic production compatible with the trends of the period.

During the last phase (1296–1319), it could be said that patronage was employed to support the maintenance of the sovereignty and Byzantine identity of Epirus. In 1296, Anna took over the government of Epirus as co-regent for her underage son Thomas. Anna decided to default on the agreed conditions in her daughter's dowry and declined to deliver Epirus into the hands of her son-in-law Philip of Taranto. Anna had always emphasised her roots from the imperial dynasty in Constantinople. She imitated Constantinopolitan art, customs, and rituals, as can be seen at the Pantanassa and the Vlacherna, from the moment of her arrival in Epirus and her marriage to Nikephoros. Following her husband's passing, the patronage of Anna and her associates was a function of promoting the legitimacy and inheritance of her son Thomas. This can best be observed in the decoration of the narthex in the church of Ag. Theodora, in which the subject matter, types, and symbolism of biblical prefigurations serve to emphasise the legitimacy of Thomas' succession. Both Anna and Thomas modelled their patronage and customs on those of the Palaiologan court, as the main issue during this period was to preserve Epirus from the Angevines and not the rapprochement with the Constantinopolitan court.

Through all five phases, the Epirote elite consciously sought to model their capital Arta after the image of Constantinople. Thus, they curated the memory of the imperial capital while using the cautiously retained link with Constantinople as the ideological foundation of their efforts to reinstate the former empire. This was not only done in Arta but also in other parts of the Epirote state. As historical circumstances changed, so did the patronage, which resonated with the period's political and ideological concerns. Studying art and material culture has been an important tool for understanding people and their societies. Art provides arenas where identities and social relationships are displayed and performed; it gives the power to individuals and groups alike to create and communicate value and to promote their ambitions. In this context, the Epirotes followed in the footsteps of their Byzantine predecessors and used art to support their political and ideological aspirations.

Note

- 1 Vokotopoulos, 1998/1999, 81, n. 34.

Catalogue of Iconographic Programmes in Epirote Churches

The aim of this catalogue is to create a small corpus of Byzantine monumental decoration (frescoes and mosaics) in the state of Epirus dated to the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century. The catalogue includes 24 Epirote churches, which are also the subject of this book. My goal was to include all the churches preserved inside the geographical territory of the erstwhile Epirote state during the reign of the Komnenos Doukas family. These iconographic programmes are preserved only partially and even then not in a very good condition.

The catalogue includes architectural plans and perspectival views showing the interior arrangement of iconographic units within each church. Furthermore, basic information about each church, as well as relevant bibliography, is also included.

- I Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora (former Ag. Georgios)
- II Arta, Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa
- III Arta, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra
- IV Arta, Kato Panagia
- V Arta, Vlacherna monastery
- VI Arta (Plissioi), Ag. Demetrios Katsouris
- VII Arta (Kirkizates), Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias
- VIII Philippiada, Pantanassa
- IX Voulgareli, Vella Church (Kokkini Ekklesia)
- X Varassova, Hermitage of the Ag. Pateres in Varassova
- XI Galaxeidi, the Church of the Metamorphosi Sotiros
- XII Efpalio, Ag. Ioannis Theologos
- XIII Evrytania, Episkopi
- XIV Mastron, Episkopi
- XV Myrtia, Monastery
- XVI Kremasta, Cave Church of Ag. Nikolaos
- XVII Preventza, Panagia (the Panagia Kyriotissa and Ag. Theodoroi)
- XVIII Rivio, Ag Stephanos
- XIX Chalkiopoulos, Ag. Andreas the Hermit
- XX Thessaloniki, Acheiropoietos
- XXI Veria, Old Metropolis
- XXII Kypseli, Ag. Demetrios Monastery

XXIII Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches

XXIV Plakoti, Metamorphosi Sotiros

I Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora (Former Ag. Georgios)



Fig. I-1 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, general view from southeast

(photo: author)

Location: Arta

Architecture type: Three-aisled basilica

Dating of the church: Around the middle of the thirteenth century. The tripartite narthex and a portico were probably added at the end of the thirteenth century

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: According to tradition, the church is associated with the sponsorship of St Theodora, the wife of Michael I Komnenos Doukas. The donor of the narthex and its decoration could have been Anna Paleologina, the wife of despot Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas

Interior decoration: The nave and the sanctuary were decorated with frescoes dated to the middle of the thirteenth century. Today, these frescoes are

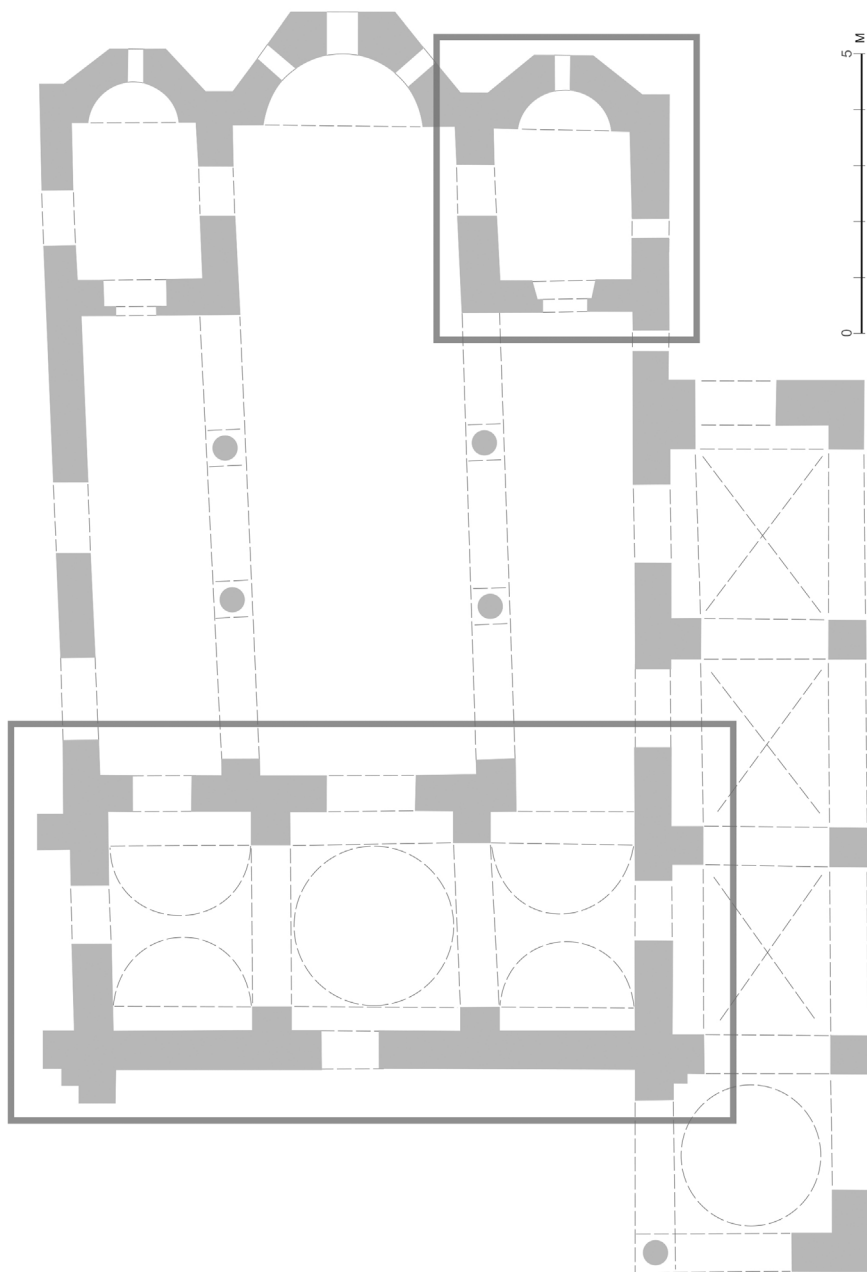


Fig. I-2a Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, architectural plan
(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

preserved only in the diakonikon and some very small parts in the sanctuary, as well as in the lower register of the nave. The post-Byzantine frescoes, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, predominate on the nave walls. The narthex is covered with the original frescoes dated to the end of the thirteenth century

References: Orlandos, 1936d; Nicol, 1957, 197–198; Velenis, 1984, 120; Garidis, 1992, 401–417; Giannoulis, 2001; Papadopoulou, 2002, 45–62; Vokotopoulos, 1997, 226–227, 2007a, 53; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 51–52, 56–57, Figs. 44, 45; Papadopoulou, 2008b; Giannoulis, 2010, 277–310, Figs. 69–78, 270–358; Ćurčić, 2010, 564–555, Figs. 643–644;

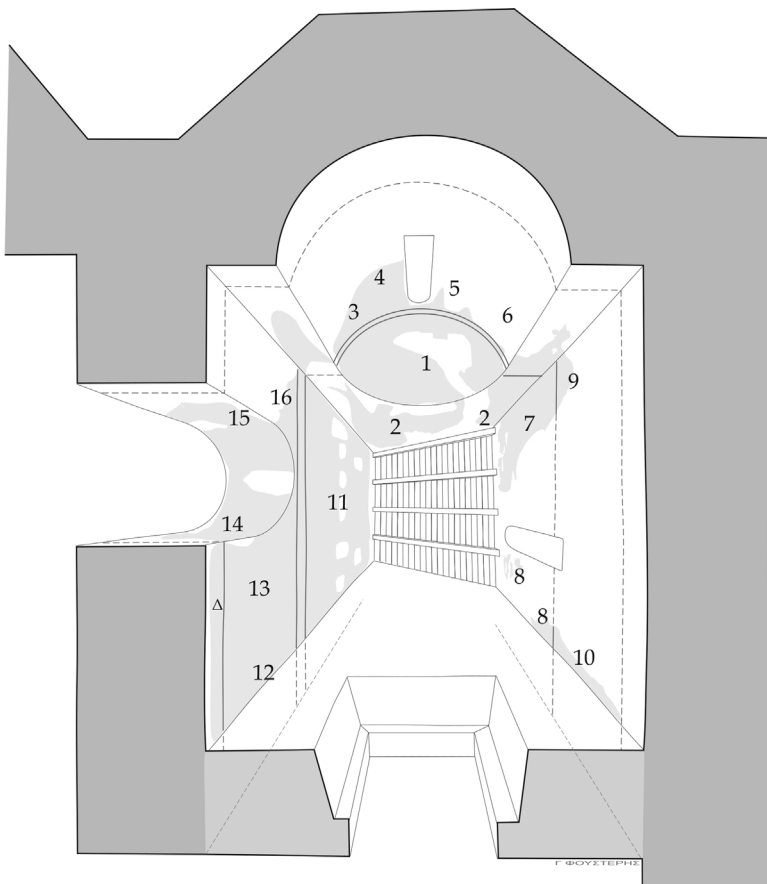


Fig. I-2b Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, The iconographic programme of the diakonikon (drawing: Georgios Foustieris)

Cvetković, 1994, 103–114, 2018; Fundić, 2016, 155–160, Figs. 6–9, draw 1; Fundić, 2018, 293, Fig. 15.1; Carr, 2020, 85.

1. St George
2. Holy Women at the Tomb (*Lithos*)
3. Unidentified hierarch (fragments)
4. St Metrophanes
- 5–6. Unidentified hierarchs
7. All hail of the myrrhbearers
8. Fragments of an unidentified scene
- 9–10. Unidentified hierarchs
11. Doubting of Thomas
- 12–13. Unidentified hierarchs (fragments)
14. St Prohoros
15. St Romanos
16. Unidentified saint

Δ = decorations

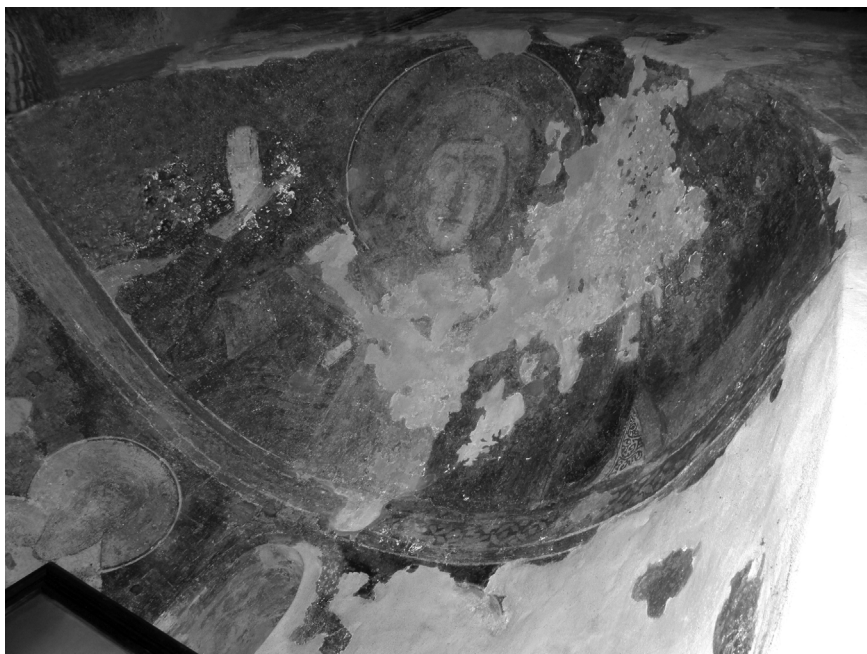


Fig. I-3 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, St George in the diakonikon
(photo: G. Fousteris)

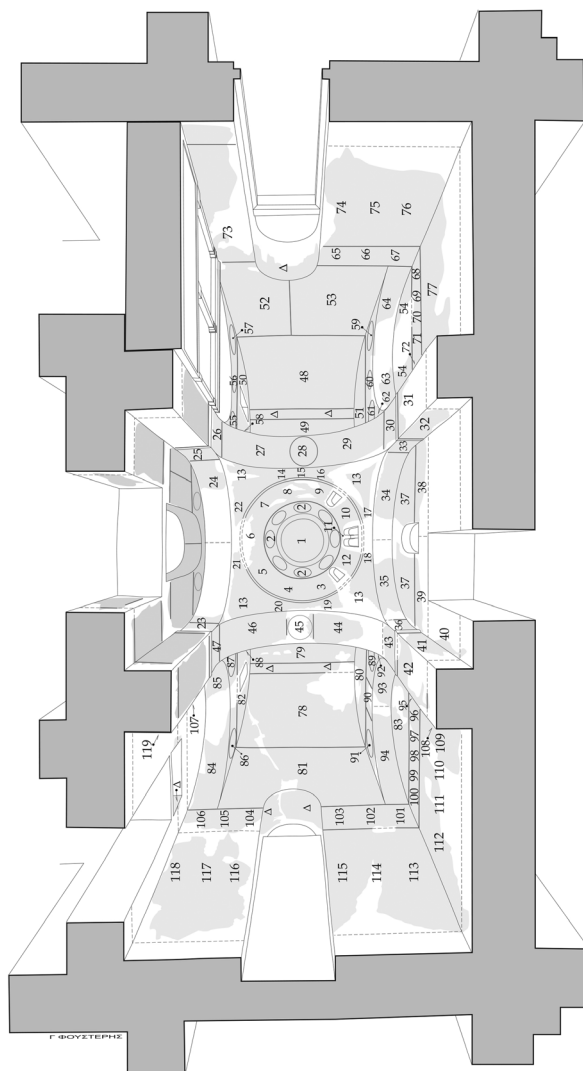


Fig. I-4 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, the iconographic programme of the narthex (drawing: G. Foustieris)

1. Ancient of Days
2. Angels in medallions
3. Prophet Daniel
4. Unidentified prophet
5. Prophet Solomon

6. Prophet David
7. Unidentified prophet
8. Unidentified prophet
9. Prophet Ezekiel
10. Unidentified prophet
11. Unidentified prophet
12. Cherub
- 13–23. Unidentified saints (*en buste*)
24. Unidentified saint (full length)
25. Unidentified saint in a medallion
26. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
27. Unidentified saint (full length)
28. Unidentified saint in a medallion
29. Unidentified saint (full length)
30. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
31. Unidentified saint (full length)
32. Unidentified saint (Anthony?)
33. St Marina (*en buste*)
34. Unidentified saint (full length)
35. Unidentified saint (full length)
36. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
37. Moses at Mount Sinai
38. Jacob wrestling with the angel
39. Vision of St Peter of Alexandria
40. Fragments of full-length hosios
41. Unidentified hosios (full length)
42. Unidentified hosios (full length)
43. Unidentified hosios (*en buste*)
44. Unidentified hosios (full length)
45. Medal with damaged content
46. Unidentified saint (full length)
47. Unidentified saint (full length)
48. The return of Jacob to Palestine
49. The farewell of Jacob and his flight to Mesopotamia
50. Blessing of Jacob by his father Isaac
51. The events in the house of Jacob's uncle Lavan at Haran
52. The farewell of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth (?)
53. Unidentified scene
54. Unidentified scene
55. Unidentified hosios
56. Unidentified saint
57. Unidentified saint in a medallion
58. St Epiphanius in a medallion
59. Unidentified saint in a medallion
60. Unidentified saint in a medallion
61. Unidentified saint in a medallion
62. St Sophronius in a medallion

63. Unidentified saint (full length)
64. Unidentified saint (full length)
65. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
66. St John of Damascus (*en buste*)
67. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
68. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
69. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
70. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
71. Unidentified martyr (*en buste*)
72. Unidentified martyr (*en buste*)
73. Angel (full length)
74. St Kyriaki (full length)
75. Unidentified female saint with royal clothes (full length)
76. St Theodora (?) (full length)
77. The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the frozen lake
78. Blessing of peace
79. The Miracle at Cana
80. Cleansing of the Temple
81. The Calling of the Disciples
82. Christ and the Samaritan Woman
83. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
84. Christ walking on water
85. Unidentified hierarch (full length)
86. Unidentified hierarch (full length)
87. St (Tara)sios (hierarch in medal)
88. Unidentified hierarch in a medallion
89. St Metrophanes in a medallion
90. Unidentified hosios in a medallion
91. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
92. Unidentified hosios in a medallion
93. Unidentified saint (full length)
94. Unidentified saint (full length)
95. Unidentified saint in a medallion
96. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
97. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
98. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
99. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
100. Unidentified hierarch (*en buste*)
101. St Nikephoros (*en buste*)
102. St Cyprian (*en buste*)
103. St James, the Lord's brother (*en buste*)
104. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
105. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
106. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
107. Unidentified stylite
108. St Ephrem the Syrian
- 109–119. Unidentified hosioi (full length)



Fig. I-5 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, dome in the narthex
(photo: G. Fousteris)



Fig. I-6 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the frozen lake
(photo: G. Fousteris)

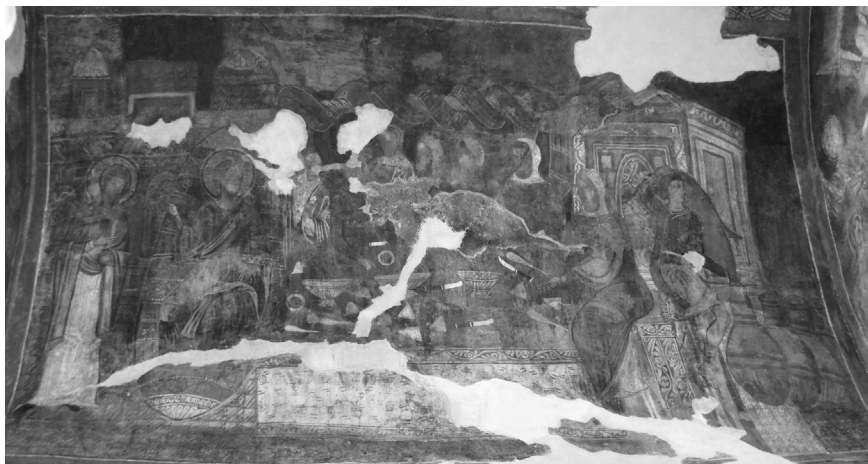


Fig. I-7 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, south wall of the southern barrel vault of the narthex

(photo: G. Fousteris)



Fig. I-8 Arta, Church of Ag. Theodora, narthex, the miracle at Cana of Galilee

(photo: G. Fousteris)

II Arta, Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa



Fig. II-1 Arta, Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa

(photo: author)

Location: Arta

Architecture type: Octagon-domed plan surrounded on two sides by two chapels and a large narthex

Dating of the church: The church was built in two phases. A smaller domed building was constructed first around 1250. Due to serious damage, this church was repaired, including considerable changes and enlargement. This second phase can be dated to *ca* 1290

Inscription: Along the marble arch above the central entrance to the church, a dedicatory inscription with the name of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas and his wife Anna is preserved

Patrons: The first phase of the church was commissioned by Michael I Komnenos Doukas or by someone from his local circle. According to the inscription, the sponsor of the second phase was Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas and his wife Anna

Interior decoration: No wall paintings from the thirteenth-century phase exist; however, fragments of mosaics are preserved. The central dome is decorated with a mosaic of the Pantokrator (Fig. II-3) surrounded by cherubim, seraphim, wheels, and 12 prophets. They can be dated to 1294–1296.

The church is also notable for its sculptural decoration preserved either in situ or in the museum of the church. In the northern chapel and outside of it, there are frescoes and a tombstone dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. In the nave and in the narthex, there are frescoes from later phases dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries

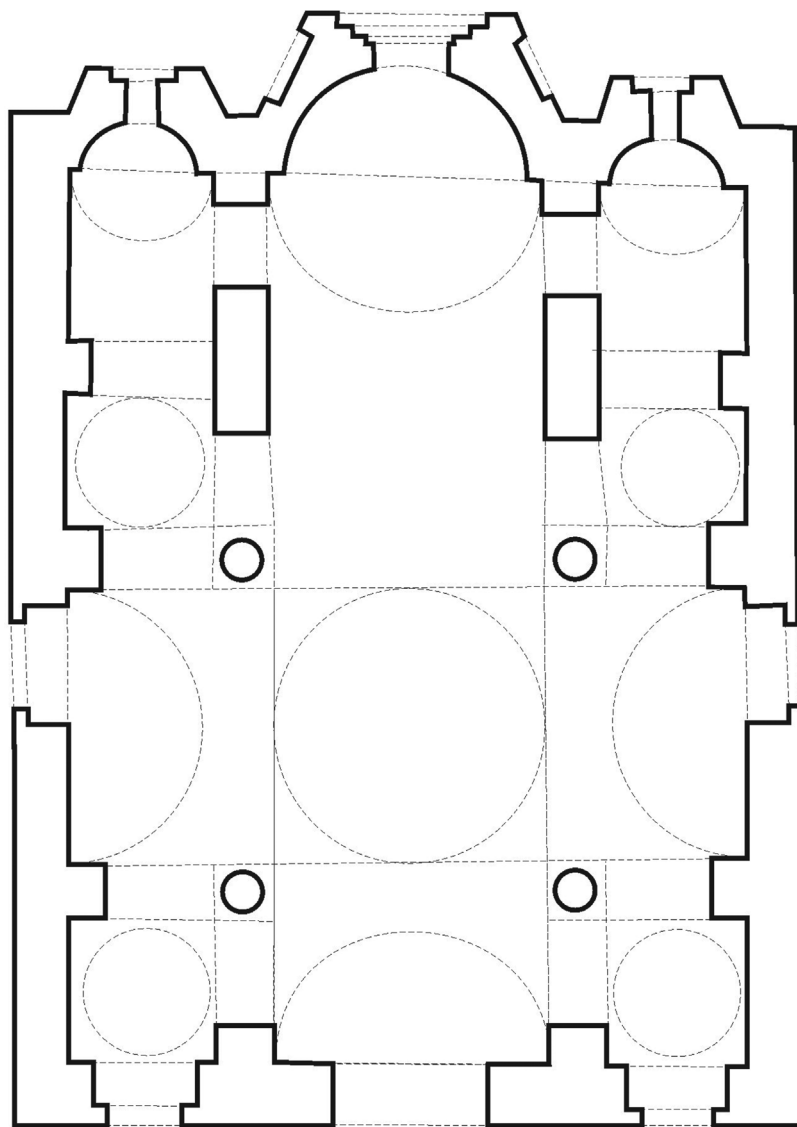


Fig. II-2 Arta, Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa, architectural plan, first phase of the church

References: Orlandos, 1963; Stikas, 1975; Nicol, 1985, 748–758, Fig. 26, pin. 123a-b; Krautheimer, 1986, 417–418; Liveri, 1986; Velenis, 1988, 280–281; Theis, 1991; Safran, 1991, 457–459, Figs. 2–5; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 53, Figs. 11–14; Papamastorakis, 2001, 6, 40–41, 65–66, pin. 6–12; Papadopoulou, 2002, 131–161, 2004; Moutsopoulos, 2002, 122–123, 128; Vokotopoulos, 2007b, 49, pin. 35a–b, 39; Bouras, 2006, 175, 181; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, Figs. 16, 42, 43, 47–49; Ćurčić, 2010, 567–569, Figs. 648–651; Rhoby, 2014, 140–142; Georgiadou, 2015, 68–83; Fundić, 2018, 295–296, Fig. 15.3; Riccardi, 2020a, 2020b.



Fig. II-3 Arta, the Church of the Panagia Parigoritissa, dome Christ Pantokrator
(photo: author)

III Arta, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra

Location: Arta, one kilometre to the west from the Old Bridge

Architecture type: The church employs the free-cross plan with a semicircular apse on the east side and a barrel-vaulted narthex on the west

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: Unknown

Interior decoration: Wall paintings of the church belong to four different time periods. Based on the style elements, the oldest layer of the frescoes, located



Fig. III-1 Arta, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, a view from SE

in the sanctuary, could be dated to the first half of the thirteenth century. The rest of the frescoes date from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries

References: Orlandos, 1922c, 312–315, 1936a, 312–315; Djurić 1979, 221; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1992, 180; Papadopoulou, 2002, 33–37; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 34–35, Fig. 21; Giannoulis, 2010, 180–207, pin. 32–42, Figs. 144–173; Vokotopoulos, 1970, 316–319, 1972a, 460–463, 1992, 45–50, 183–185, 2007c, 51, pin. 36a, 2012, 123, Fig. 2; Fundić, 2013b, 151–157, 250–254, Figs. 28–34.

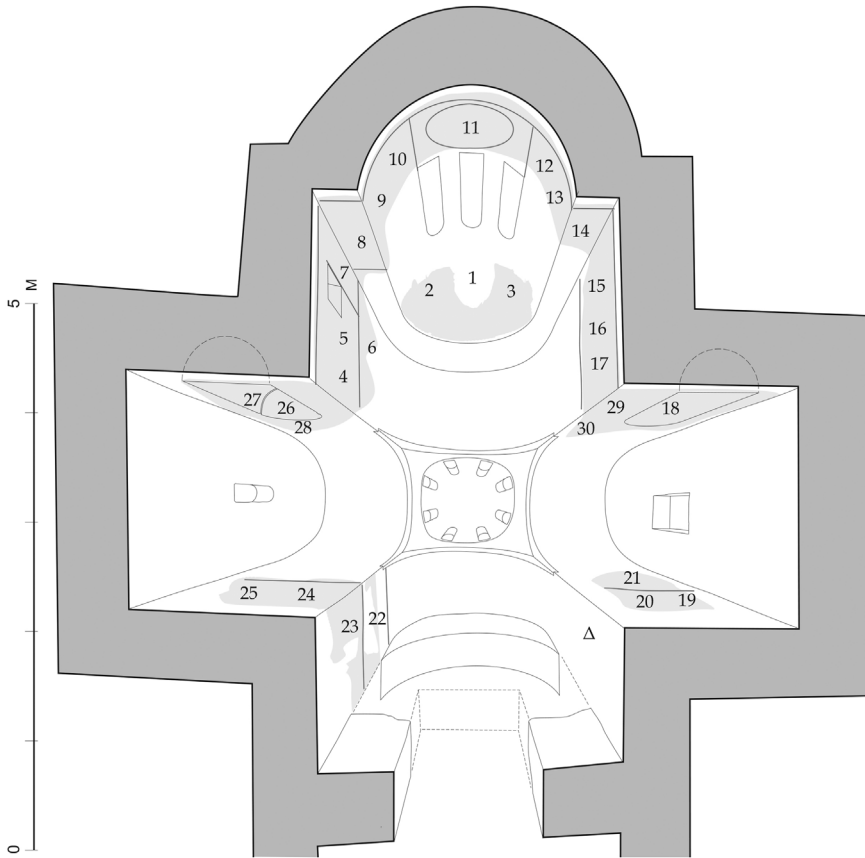


Fig. III-2 Arta, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, the iconographic programme of the church
(drawing: G. Fousteris)

1. The Virgin Mary
2. Angel
3. Angel
4. St Panteleimon
5. Unidentified hierarch
6. Ascension
7. St Eleftherios
8. St Stephen
9. St Gregory the Theologian
10. Unidentified hierarch
11. St Basil the Great
12. Unidentified hierarch

13. Unidentified hierarch
14. Unidentified deacon
15. St Kosmas the Melodist
16. St Theodoti
17. St Damianos
18. St Nicholas
19. St Constantine
20. St Helena
21. Baptism of Jesus
22. Raising of Lazarus
23. Vision of the Great Martyr Eustathios Plakidas
24. St George
25. St Demetrios
26. St Germanos
27. St Vlassios
- 28–30. Frescoes from the sixteenth/eighteenth century



Fig. III-3 Arta, Ag. Vassileios stin Gefyra, Sts Panteleimon
(drawing: G. Fousteris)

IV Arta, Kato Panagia



Fig. IV-1 Arta, monastery Kato Panagia, general view from SE

(photo: author)

Location: Arta

Architecture type: Three-aisled cross-vaulted church with a narthex

Dating of the church: Mid-thirteenth century

Inscriptions: Three integrated into the facades of the church (Fig. 5)

Patron: Michael II Komnenos Doukas

Interior decoration: The original decoration from the thirteenth century is preserved only in the area of the diakonikon and in fragments in the lower register in the nave. All other walls are covered with frescoes dated to the eighteenth century, from 1715 and later

References: Orlandos, 1936c; Chatzidakis, 1967, 61; Djurić, 1979, 221; Ladas, 1982; Kalopissi-Verti, 1984b, 227; Velenis, 1984, 28, 97, 120–121, 187, 191; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1992, 180; Katsaros, 1992, 8–13, 16–17, 29–32, 120–122, 187, 194–195, 1994, 266–268; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 50–52, Figs. 5–6; Papadopoulou, 2002, 91–104, 2007, 51, 369–396; Vokotopoulos, 2007c, 51, 2012, 123; Giannoulis, 2010, 209–225, oin. 43–50, Figs. 509–520; Rhoby, 2014, 151–153; Fundić, 2013b, 133–134, 255–262, 2016, 146–149, Figs. 2 and 3.

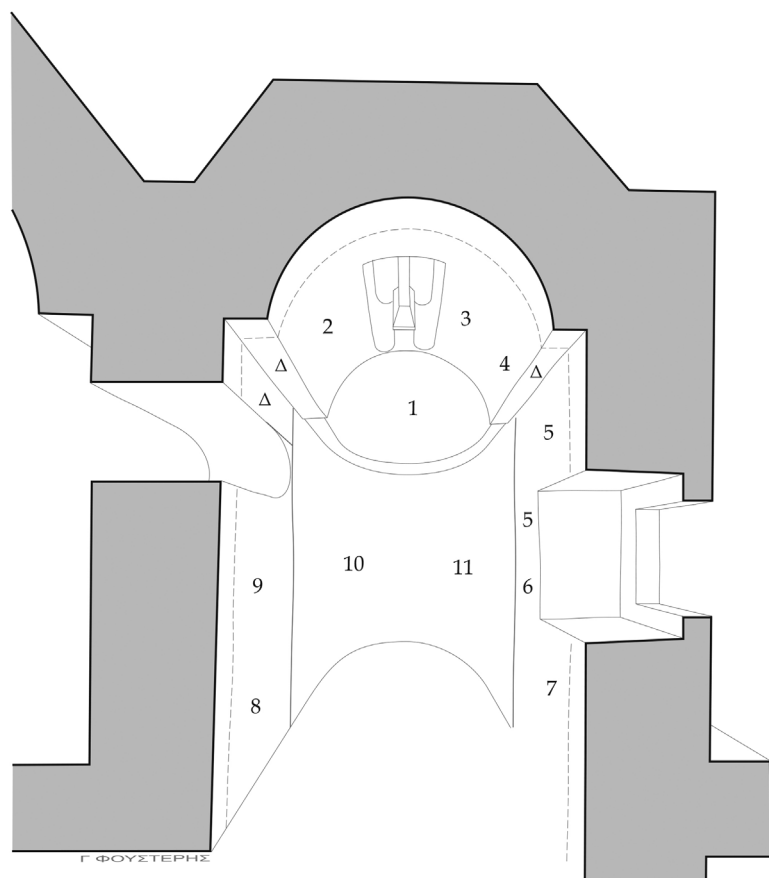


Fig. IV-2 Arta, Kato Panagia, the iconographic programme of the diakonikon
(drawing: G. Fousteris)

1. Ancient of Days
2. St Meletios
3. St Nikephoros
4. St Eleftherios
5. St Modestos
6. St Ypatios
7. St Oikoumenios
8. St Anthimos
9. St Gregory the Illuminator
10. Jesus teaching in the Temple
11. Zechariah Rejecting the Gifts



Fig. IV-3 Arta, Kato Panagia, Zechariah rejecting the Gifts
(photo: G. Fousteris)

V Arta, Vlacherna Monastery



Fig. IV-1 Vlacherna monastery, general view from SE
(photo: author)

Location: Village of Vlacherna, northeast from Arta

Architecture type: This building has a complicated history and many different structural phases. In the present form, it is a three-aisled, barrel-vaulted basilica with three domes and a narthex

Inscriptions: Inscriptions are preserved only on sarcophagi and consist of the names of Epirote rulers and their relatives, including members of the Petraliphas family

Patrons: Members of the Komnenos Doukas and the Petraliphas families could have been the patrons of some of the works inside the church. It has been generally accepted that the iconographic programme of the narthex can be connected to the sponsorship of Anna Palaiologina, wife of depot Nikephoros

Dating of the church: The first phase of the church dates back to the middle Byzantine period. To this phase belongs the southeastern arch of the diakonikon and the lower eastern part of the southern side of the nave. This basilica was severely damaged, conceivably by an earthquake, and was reconstructed sometime later in the same century. The narthex was added at the end of the thirteenth century

Interior decoration: The iconographic programme of the main church is not completely preserved. However, both the preserved decoration and the now-empty substantial surfaces in the nave that once contained frescoes indicate that the iconographic programme must have been very extensive. The frescoes of the main church date to the middle of the thirteenth century. The decoration of the Vlacherna's narthex was probably completed at the end of the thirteenth century, most likely after 1284, i.e., after the return of Anna from Constantinople and the denunciation of the Council of Lyon in the years 1283–1284

References: Orlandos, 1936f; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1975, 208–216, 1986, 1992, 179–203, 2009; Velenis, 1984, 30, 97, 109, 111, 260, 272; Tsiouris, 1988, 32–35, 188, 194–196; Vokotopoulos, 1992, 186–187, 2007c, 52, Fig. 36β; Bouras-Boura, 2002, 88; Papadopoulou, 2002, 79–87, 2008, 37–46, Figs. 23–32, 2015a; Giannoulis, 2010, Figs. 199–269, pin. 51–67; Čurčić, 2010, 565–566, Fig. 641c; Fundić, 2013a, 221–222, Fig. 2, 2013b, 134–139, 263–276, Figs. 48–69, 2016, 149, Fig. 5; Rhoby, 2014, 147–151; Parani, 2016.

1. Blessing of the Virgin
2. Embrace of Virgin and Elisabeth
3. St Eleftherios (full length)
4. Unidentified hierarch (full length)
5. Unidentified hierarch (full length)
6. Fragments of an unidentified scene
7. Doubting of Thomas
8. The healing of the Paralytic of Bethesda
9. Unidentified evangelist

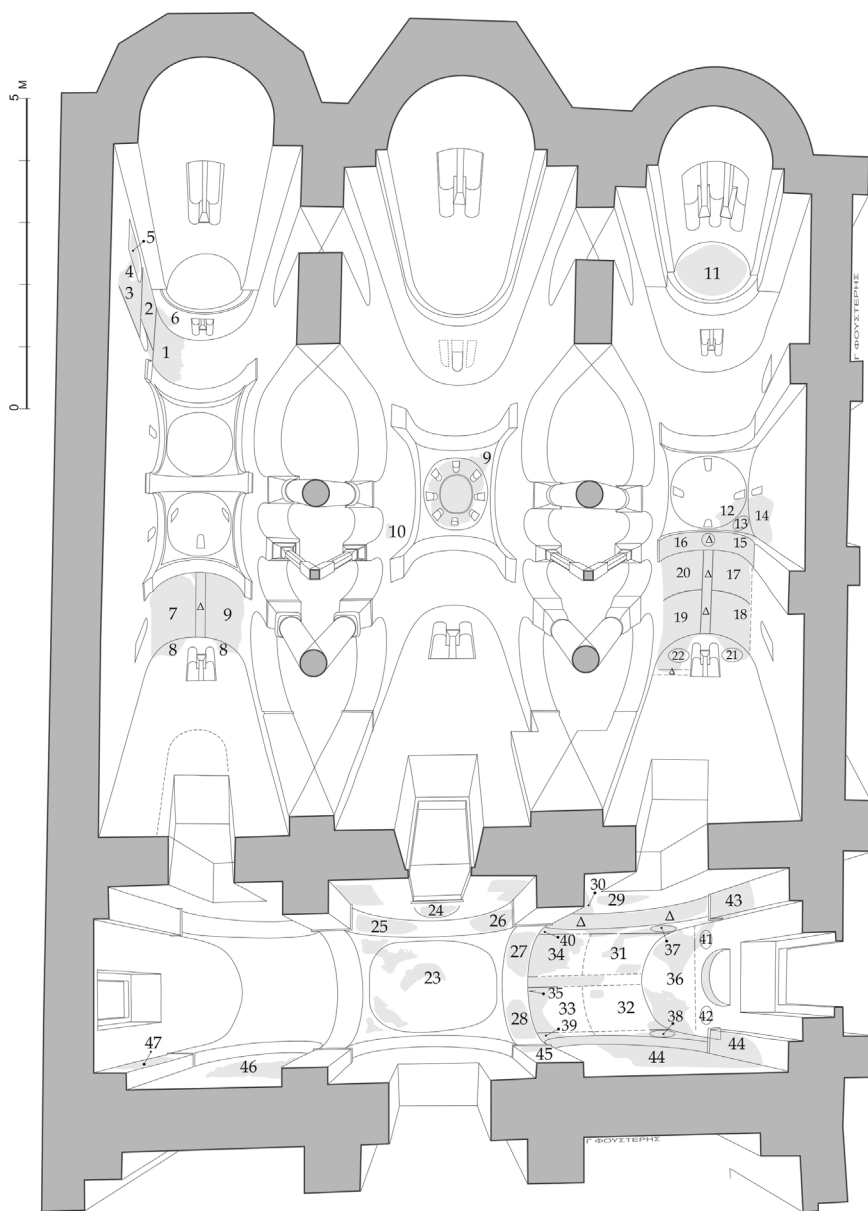


Fig. V-2 Vlacherna monastery, the iconographic programme of the church
(drawing: G. Fouteris)

- 10. Descent into Hell
- 11. John the Baptist
- 12. Pentecost (fragments)
- 13. St Mardarios

14. St Damian (full length)
15. King Hezekiah (full length)
16. Prophet Solomon (full length)
17. Prayer of Christ in Gethsemane
18. Betrayal of Christ
19. Mocking of Christ
20. Judgment of Pilate
21. St Kosmas the Melodist in a medallion
22. St John of Damascus in a medallion
23. The Last Judgment
24. The Virgin with the Child
25. Angel
26. Angel
27. Unidentified hierarch (full length)



Fig. V-3 Vlacherna monastery, Blessing of the Virgin, (detail)
(photo: G. Fousteris)

28. Unidentified hierarch (full length)
29. Flight of Elisabeth
30. Unidentified hosiomartyr (full length)
31. The Ecumenical Council
32. The Ecumenical Council
33. The Ecumenical Council
34. The Ecumenical Council
35. Unidentified scene
36. Hospitality of Abraham
37. Unidentified saint in a medallion
38. Unidentified saint in a medallion
39. Unidentified deacon in a medallion
40. Unidentified saint in a medallion
41. Unidentified saint in a medallion
42. Unidentified saint in a medallion
43. St Mary of Egypt
44. Litany of the Icon of the Hodegetria
45. St Anembodistos (full length)
46. Christmas Sticheron
47. Unidentified martyr (full length)

VI Arta (Plissioi), Ag. Demetrios Katsouris



Fig. VI-1 Plissioi, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, general view from NW
(photo: author)

Location: Village of Plissioi, five kilometres west of Arta

Architecture type: A peculiar cross-in-square church with a large dome and a narthex on its west side

Dating of church: The end of the eighth or the first half of the ninth century.

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: Unknown

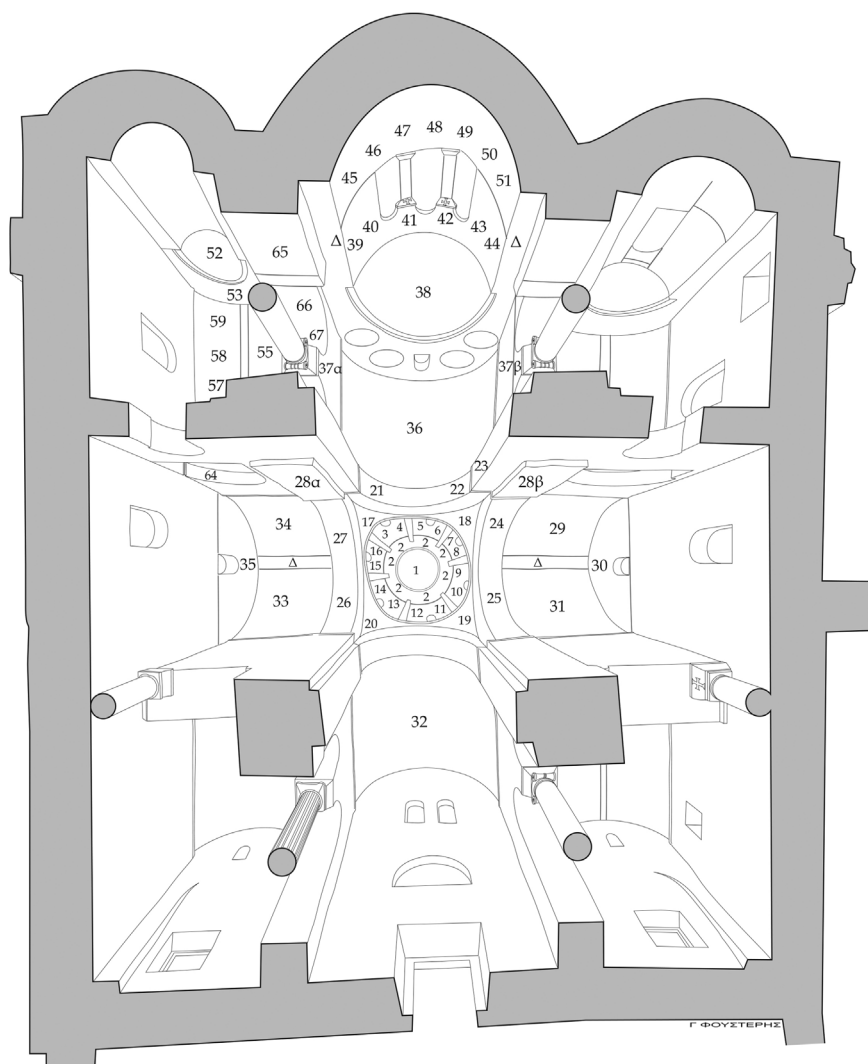


Fig. VI-2a Plissioi, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, the iconographic programme of the church (drawing: G. Fousteris)

Interior decoration: At least three layers of frescoes exist. The first phase of the wall paintings dates back to a period just before 1230, while the second one dates to the end of the thirteenth century. In the conche of the prothesis, and in the walled triple window of the sanctuary, there is a small painting from the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth centuries

References: Orlandos, 1922a, 1936b, 57–69; Kalopissi-Verti, 1984b, 226; Papamastorakis, 1992, 419–454; Kalopissi-Verti, 1999, 67, Fig. 2; Papadopoulou, 2002, 25–33; Vokotopoulos, 1992, 183, 2012, 123, Fig. 1; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 31–32, 47, Figs. 17–19, 38–41; Giannoulis, 2010, 111–179, pin. 14–31, Figs. 78–143; Fundić, 2013a, 231–233, Fig. 4, 2013b, 116–118, 277–291, Figs. 70–92.

1. Christ Pantokrator
2. Angels
3. Prophet Obadiah
4. Prophet Daniel
5. Prophet Nahum
6. Prophet Ezekiel
7. Prophet Zechariah
8. Prophet Malachiah
9. Prophet Zephaniah
10. Prophet Joel
11. Prophet Moses
12. Prophet Isaiah
13. Prophet Habakkuk
14. Prophet Jeremiah
15. Prophet Jonah
16. Prophet Elisha
- 17–18. Unidentified evangelists
19. Evangelist Mark
20. Unidentified evangelist
21. Prophet Solomon
22. Prophet David
23. Unidentified saint
24. Prophet Aaron
- 25–26. Unidentified prophets
27. Unidentified prophets
28. Annunciation: (a) Gabriel; (b) Mary
29. Nativity of Christ
30. Adoration of the Magi
31. Hypapante
32. Pentecost
33. Entry into Jerusalem
34. Descent into Hades
35. Holy Women at the Tomb (*Lithos*)

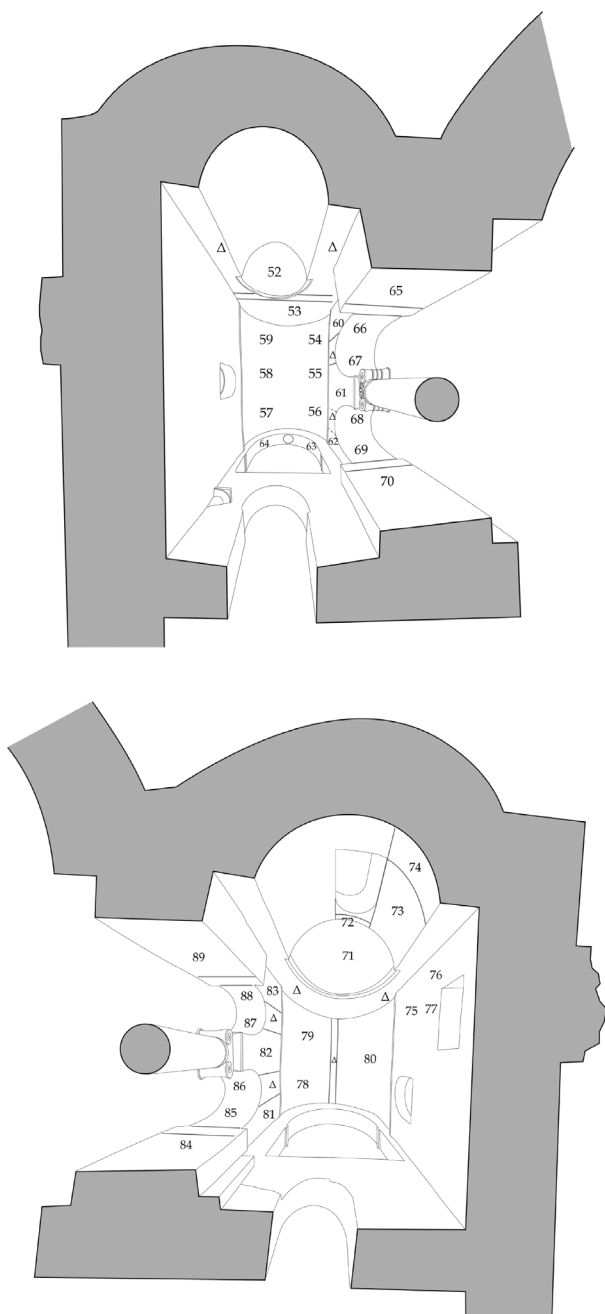


Fig. VI-2b–c Plissioi, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, the iconographic programme of prothesis, diakonikon and western corner bays

(drawing: G. Fousteris)

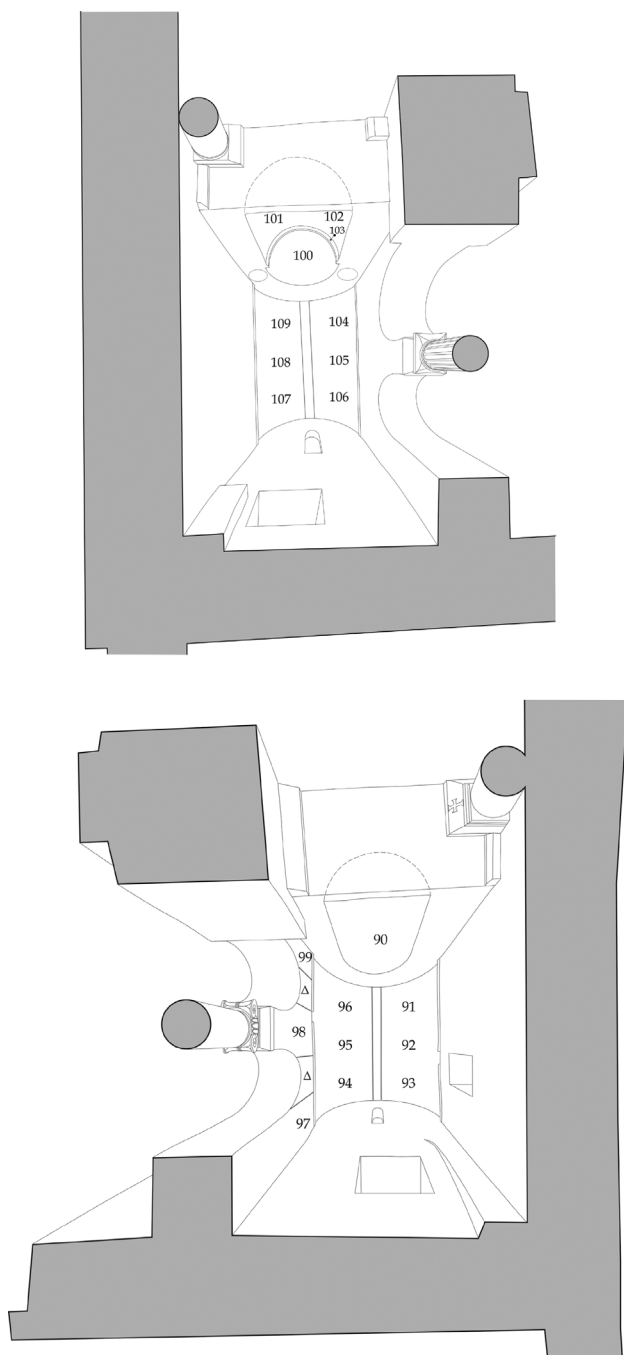


Fig. VI-2b-c (Continued)

36. Ascension
37. Communion of the apostles: 43a. Giving the bread; 43b. Giving the wine
38. The Virgin Mary the Platytera
- 39–40. Unidentified hierarchs (full length)
- 41–42. Unidentified hierarchs in medallions
- 43–45. Unidentified hierarchs (full length)
46. St Epiphanius (of Cyprus, full length)
47. Unidentified saint (full length)
48. St Nikephoros (of Constantinople, full length)
49. St Vlassios (full length)
50. St Modestos (full length)
51. St Polykarpos (full length)
52. St John the Baptist
53. Jesus Christ
54. Unidentified hierarch in a medallion
- 55–59. Unidentified hierarchs in medallions
- 60–64. Unidentified saints in medallions
65. St Savvas (full length)
66. St Anatolios in a medallion
67. Unidentified martyr saint in a medallion
68. St Tryphon in a medallion
69. Unidentified martyr saint in a medallion
70. St Niketas of Medikiou (full length)
71. Jesus Christ ('the one in another form?')
72. Inscription
73. St Achileios (full length)
74. St Gregory Thaumaturgos
75. Unidentified hierarch (first layer)
- 76–77. Unidentified hierarchs (second layer; full length)
78. Abraham's sacrifice
79. The Reception of the Angels by Abraham
80. Hospitality of Abraham (The Trinity)
81. Unidentified saint in a medallion
82. St Alpheios in a medallion
83. St Philadelphos in a medallion
84. St Anthony (full length)
- 85–88. Unidentified saints in medallions
89. Unidentified hosiote confessor (full length)
90. The Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus
91. St Ermolaos in a medallion
92. St Nicholas (?) in a medallion
93. Unidentified anargyros saint
94. Unidentified saint in a medallion
95. St Stephen the First Martyr (?) in a medallion

- 96. St Panteleimon in a medallion
- 97–99. Unidentified saints in medallions
- 100. Jesus Christ
- 101–102. Unidentified hierarchs in medallions
- 103. Inscription
- 104–109. Unidentified saints in medallions



Fig. VI-3 Plissioi, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, bema apse
(photo: G. Fousteris)



Fig. VI-4 Plissioi, Ag. Demetrios Katsouris, dome, prophets Zephaniah and Joel
(photo: Historic and Photographic Archive of Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens)

VII Arta (Kirkizates), Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias

Location: Village of Kirkizates, four kilometres southwest from Arta

Architecture type: Domed cross-in-square church of the two-columned variant with a narthex on its western side

Dating of church: The end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century

Inscriptions: No



Fig. VII-1 Kirkizates, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, general view from NW
(photo: author)

Patrons: Unknown

Interior decoration: A layer of paintings cover the church in its entirety. In many places, sections of the wall paintings are indistinguishable due to salts and soot. The prevailing opinion is that the frescoes date to the beginning of the thirteenth century. Arguments for such dating are based on the style but also on the choice of themes, which were considered typical for the twelfth century. The analysis, however, shows that the monument, especially in terms of iconographic solutions, is more advanced and can be dated to the middle of the thirteenth century. Although the narthex needs to be cleaned, it is obvious that the representations of the life of St Nicholas belong to the same painting phase as the rest of the church

References: Orlandos, 1936e, 131–148, Figs. 11–14; Djurić, 1979, 215, Fig. 22; Kalopissi-Verti, 1984, 192, 226; Velenis, 1988, 281–282; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1992, 180, Figs. 4–5; Vokotopoulos, 1992, 68, 162–163, 2007c, 51; Safran, 1992, 460; Vokotopoulos, 1998–1999, 80, 88, Fig. 1, 2012, 123, Fig. 2; Papadopoulou, 2002, 66–69, Figs. 74, 75; Tsiouris, 1988, 36–37; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 33–34, Fig. 20; Giannoulis, 2010, 27–110; Fundić, 2010, 87–110; Fundić and Kappas, 2013, 141–142, 149, 151, Figs. 1–2.

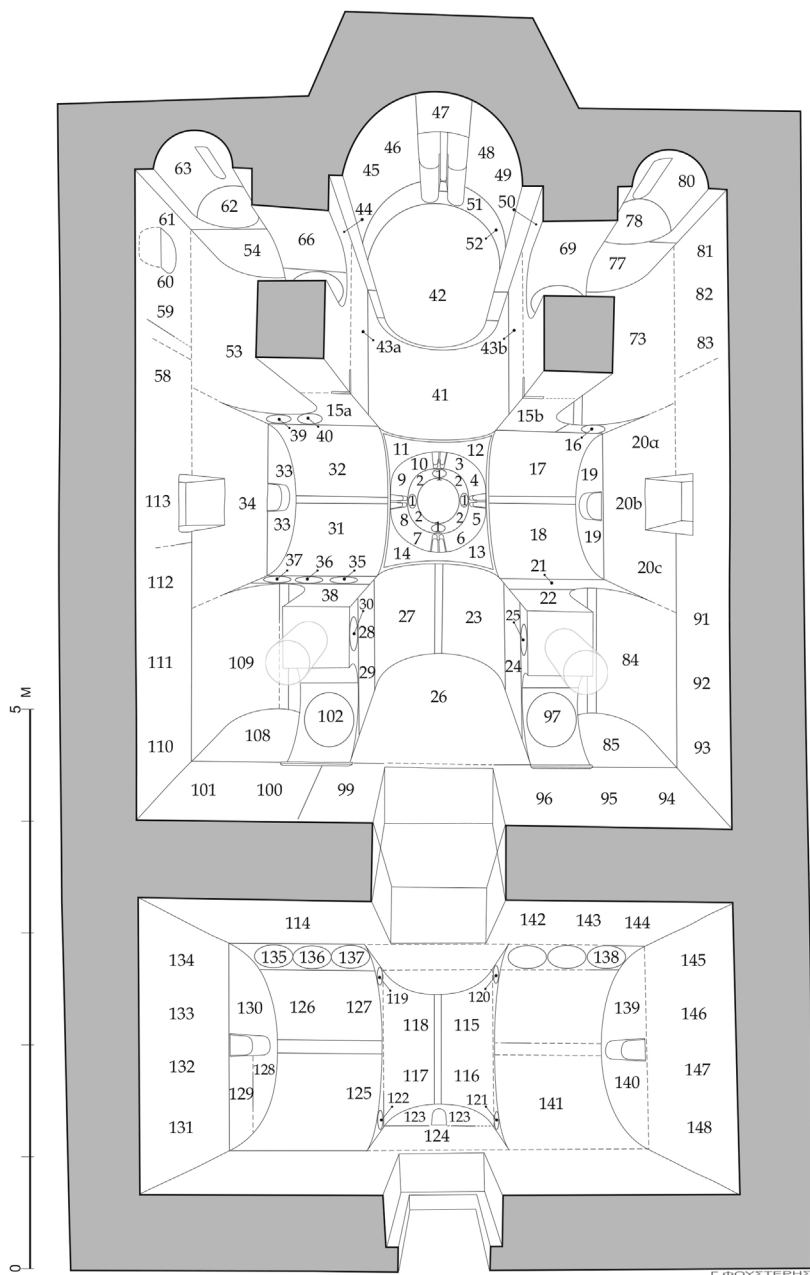


Fig. VII-2a Kirkizates, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, the iconographic programme of the church (drawing: G. Fouteris)

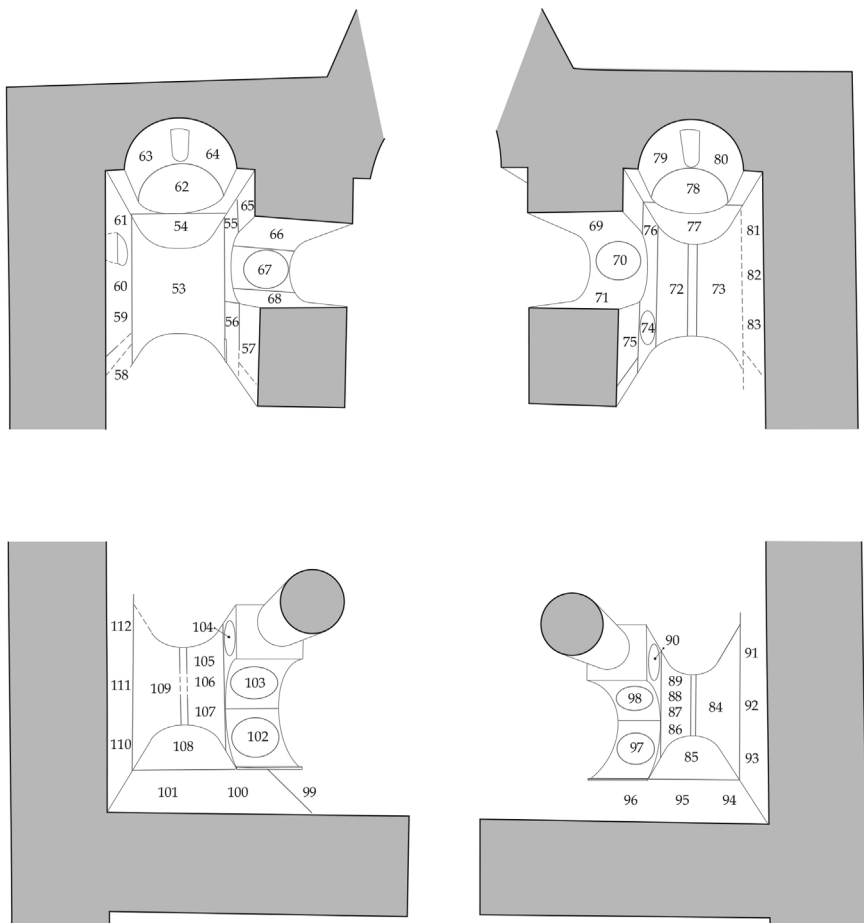


Fig. VII-2b Kirkizates, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, the iconographic programme of prothesis, diakonikon, and western corners bays

(drawing: G. Fouteris)

1. Angels in medallions
2. Angels
- 3–5. Unidentified prophets
6. Prophet Ezekiel
7. Unidentified prophet
8. Prophet Jonah
- 9–10. Unidentified prophets
11. John the Evangelist
- 12–14. Unidentified evangelists

- 15a. Archangel Gabriel from the Annunciation
- 15b. The Virgin Mary from the Annunciation
- 16. Prophet Isaiah in a medallion
- 17. Nativity of Christ
- 18. Entry into Jerusalem
- 19. Raising of Lazarus
- 20b. Ascending Mt Tabor
- 20b. Transfiguration
- 20c. Descending Mt Tabor
- 21. Last Supper
- 22. Unidentified warrior saint
- 23. Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane
- 24. Judas' betrayal
- 25. Unidentified saint in a medallion
- 26. Crucifixion (?)
- 27. Descent from the Cross
- 28. Mocking of Christ
- 29. Christ Helkomenos
- 30. Unidentified saint in a medallion
- 31. Lamentation of Christ
- 32. Resurrection
- 33. Myrrhbearers at the tomb
- 34. Dormition
- 35–37. Unidentified saints in medallions
- 38. St Artemios
- 39–40. Unidentified saints in medallions
- 41. Ascension
- 42. The Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus
- 43. Communion of the apostles: 43a. Giving the bread; 43b. Giving the wine
- 44. St Theophylaktos
- 45–46. Unidentified hierarchs (full length)
- 47. Mandyion
- 48–50. Unidentified hierarchs (full length)
- 51–52. Unidentified hierarchs in medallions
- 53. Pentecost
- 54. Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple
- 55. Unidentified scene (Nativity of the Virgin Mary?)
- 56. Unidentified scene
- 57. Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth
- 58. John the Baptist
- 59. Unidentified deacon (full length)
- 60–61. Unidentified hierarchs (full length)
- 62. Archangel Michael
- 63. Hierarch in a medallion
- 64. St (Clem)ent (?)

65. Unidentified deacon
66. St Leo of Catania
67. Unidentified hierarch in a medallion
68. St Spyridon
69. St Ignatios Theophoros (of Antioch)
70. Unidentified hierarch in a medallion
71. St Gregory of Nyssa
72. Adoration of the Magi
73. Hypapante
74. Unidentified saint in a medallion
75. St Polykarpos
76. St Gregory (?)
77. Ancient of Days
78. Archangel Gabriel
- 79–80. Unidentified hierarchs
81. St Gregory Thaumaturgos
82. St Constantin
83. St Helena
84. Washing of the feet of the apostles
85. Three Holy Youths in the Furnace
- 86–90. Unidentified saints in medallions
- 91–92. Unidentified warrior saints
93. St Merkourios
- 94–95. Unidentified warrior saints
96. Apostle Paul
- 97–98. Unidentified saints in medallions (full length)
99. Apostle Peter
- 100–104. Unidentified saints in medallions
105. Prayer of Anna (mother of the Virgin Mary)
106. Prayer of Joachim (father of the Virgin Mary)
107. Meeting of Joachim and Anna
108. Seven Sleepers of Ephesus
109. Unidentified scene
- 110–112. Unidentified warrior saints (full length)
113. Unidentified saint (full length)
114. Baptism of Jesus
115. Nativity of St Nicholas
116. St Nicholas led to a teacher
- 117–118. Unidentified scenes from the life of St Nicholas
- 119–122. Unidentified saints in medallions
123. Unidentified scene from the life of St Nicholas
124. Fragments of an unidentified scene
125. St Nicholas saves three innocent soldiers from execution
126. Ordination of St Nicholas (to a priest?)
127. Ordination of St Nicholas to a bishop
128. St Nicholas appearing to Ablabius
129. Unidentified scene from the life of St Nicholas

- 130. St Nicholas saving a ship at storm
- 131–134. Unidentified hosioi (full length)
- 135. St Auxentios in a medallion
- 136–138. Unidentified saints in medallions
- 139. Unidentified scene (Elisha?)
- 140. Prophet Isaiah touched by a piece of coal
- 141. Unidentified scene
- 142–148. Unidentified hosioi (full length)



Fig. VII-3 Kirkizates, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, Seven Sleepers of Ephesus
(photo: G. Fousteris)



Fig. VII-4 Kirkizates, Ag. Nikolaos tis Rodias, Mandylion
(photos: G. Fousteris)

VIII Philippiada, Pantanassa



Fig. VIII Philippiada, Pantanassa
(photos: author)

Location: Four kilometres north from Philippiada

Architecture type: Cross-in-square church of complex (Constantinopolitan) variant. In a later phase, it was framed by an ambulatory, which ends in two chapels on either side of the nave

Dating of church: The nave and the narthex of the church date back to the fifth decade of the thirteenth century. The chapels and the peristyle were added during the reign of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas

Inscriptions: Included in the donor representation under the infant, in the southern portico, there is a large written inscription. Also, the name of Nikephoros I is found on a brick plaque with an inscription that was probably built into the peristyle of the church. An inscribed brick with the name Ν [ι] Κ [η] Φ [ό] Ρ [ος] was found during the excavation of a later tomb in the northeastern chapel, and the same name also appears on the trunk of the southwestern column

Patrons: The patron of the church was the despot of Epirus, Michael II Komnenos Doukas, while the peristyle was added by Nikephoros I Komnenos Doukas

Interior decoration: Many fragments of frescoes have been preserved which could be dated to the last decades of the thirteenth century

References: Papadopoulou, 2002, 118; Vokotopoulos, 2001, 50–51, 2007c, 2008, 73–79, 2012, 131–132; Velenis, 2008, 81–85; Ćurčić, 2010, 569–570, 652; Fundić, 2013b, 187–188, 219, 311–312, Figs. 117–122; Georgiadou, 2015, 65–93; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 2017, 280–282, Fig. 5.

IX Voulgareli, Vella Church (Kokkini Ekklesia)

Location: Village Voulgareli (Drosopigi), 56 kilometres from Arta

Architecture type: Dome cross-in-square church of the distyle variant with a narthex

Inscriptions: The inscription is located on the western wall of the nave above the entrance door

Patrons: Protostrator Theodore Tzimiskes with his brother John and their wives.

Dating of church: 1295/1296

Interior decoration: The church was once decorated in its entirety, but most of the wall paintings are damaged today. The frescoes could be dated to the end of the thirteenth century

References: Orlandos, 1927, 153–169; Djurić, 1979, 222, pl. XIII, 25; Velenis, 1988, 284; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 54–55, 98–99, Fig. 15, 87–88, 1999, 67, Fig. 3, 2006b, 124; Katsaros, 1992, 524–525; Acheimastou-Potamianou, 1992, 181; Papadopoulou, 2002, 118–125; Parani, 2003, 74, 78; Evans, 2004, 86, Fig. 42; Vokotopoulos, 2007c, 52, pin. 37a, 2012, 127, Fig. 10; Papadopoulou and Tsiara, 2008, 46–47, Figs. 33–37; Rhoby, 2009, 146–150, abb. 19; Giannoulis, 2010, 311–330, pin. 79–81, Figs. 359–388; Fundić, 2013b, 188–195, 314–323, Figs. 123–135, 2016, 152; Kontopanagou, 2016, 60–61.



Fig. IX-1 Voulgareli. Vella church, general view from SW

(photo: author)

1. Mother of God praying
2. Angel
3. Unidentified hierarch
4. Unidentified hierarch
5. Unidentified deacon
6. Unidentified hierarch
7. Unidentified hierarch
8. Evangelist
9. Evangelist
10. Prophet Moses
11. Prophet Solomon
12. Crucifixion (fragments)
13. Archangel
14. Symeon Stylite
15. Donor's inscription
16. St Daniel the Stylite
17. Apostle Peter
18. Unidentified saint
19. Unidentified saint

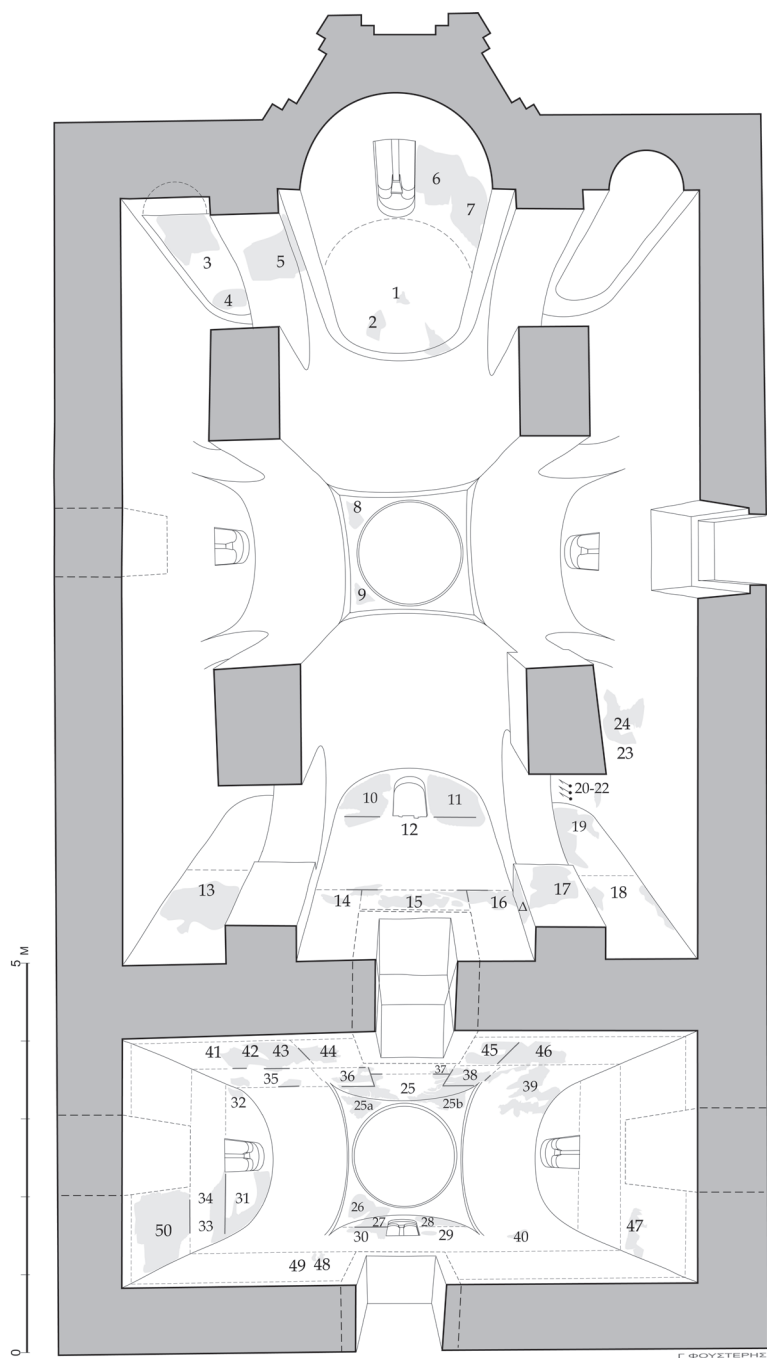


Fig. IX-2 Voulgareli, Vella church, the iconographic programme of the church
(drawing: G. Foustieris)

- 20–23. Unidentified saints (*en buste*)
24. Unidentified saint (*en buste*) (fragments)
25. Mother of God enthroned (fragments of the throne)
26. Angel
27. Angel
28. Angel
29. Unidentified scene
30. Unidentified scene
31. Unidentified scene
32. Unidentified scene
33. Unidentified scene
34. St Eustathios
35. Presentation of the Virgin Mary
36. Couple of the church founders
37. St Bacchus
38. Couple of the church founders
39. Unidentified scene
40. Unidentified scene
41. St Theodosius the Cenobiarch
42. St Arsenios
43. St Anthony
44. Mother of God
45. Jesus Christ
46. Baptism of Christ
47. St Euphrosynos
48. St Theodore the Studite
49. St Stephen or Theophanes Graptos
50. St Hilarion
51. Prophet Elijah fed by a raven



Fig. IX-3 Voulgareli, Vella church, nave, west wall, the Stylites, and the donor inscription (photo: author)



Fig. IX-4 Voulgareli, Vella church, nave, west wall, St Daniel the Stylite
(photo: Georgios Fouteris)

X Varassova, Hermitage of the Ag. Pateres in Varassova

Location: Varassova

Architecture type: Cave church

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: Unknown

Interior decoration: Today, only four representations survive: transfiguration, the Pentecost, two frontal full-length angels holding a large Cross of the Resurrection with the inscription $\eta\rho\iota\ \Upsilon\psi\omicron(\sigma)\eta\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\iota\mu\acute{\eta}\sigma\upsilon\ \Sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon$, and a supernatural head of a saint identified as St Peter. The frescoes can be dated to the middle of the thirteenth century



Fig. X Varassova (Aetolia) Hermitage of the Ag. Pateres, Exaltation of the Holy Cross
(photo: author)

References: Vokotopoulos, 1967b, 325; Paliouras, 1985, 80, 176–177, Figs. 54, 181, 182; Vasilakeris and Fountouli, 2002; Fundić and Kappas, 2013, 151–152, Fig. 3; Fundić, 2013b, 167–168, 324, Fig. 136.

XI Galaxeidi, the Church of the Metamorphosi Sotiros



Fig. XI Galaxeidi, the church of the Metamorphosi Sotiros

(photo: G. Fousteris)

Location: On the slope of the Agios Vlassios mountain, a short distance north of Galaxeidi

Architecture type: Cross-vaulted church

Dating of church: Third quarter of the thirteenth century

Inscriptions: Only a few words are preserved from on the altar apse: [ΠΑΤΡΙ] ΑΡΧΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟ[ΠΟΥ] . . .

Patrons: Michael II Komnenos Doukas

Interior decoration: The church was decorated in its entirety. Only a few, very damaged fragments survive on the northern wall. The frescoes can be dated to the third decade of the thirteenth century

References: Sathas, 1962; Nicol, 1957, 129–131; Küper, 1990, 109–110; Vokotopoulos, 1993–1994, 199–210; Fundić, 2013b, 325–327, Figs. 137 and 138, 2018, 293.

XII Efpalio, Ag. Ioannis Theologos

Location: About three kilometres northwest of the village of Efpalio (formerly Soules) and 10 kilometres from the town of Nafpaktos



Fig. XII-1 Efpalio Doridos, Church of Ag. Ioannis Theologos, general view from SW
(photo: author)

Architecture type: The church has a free-cross plan with a raised central barrel-vaulted bay acting as a dome

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: Unknown

Dating of the church: The main body of the church was constructed in the second half of the twelfth century and the northern cross arm in the second half of the thirteenth century. Some construction works are dated to the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century

Interior decoration: The church was originally decorated in its entirety. Today, several scenes are preserved, and they could be placed in the second half or closer to the end of the thirteenth century

References: Orlandos, 1922b, 37–42, Evangelidis, 1931, 271–272; Katsaros, 1981, 237–252; Bouras, and Boura, 2002, 147–149; Fundić, 2013b, 165–166, 330–331, Fig. 143, 2018, 294, Fig. 15.2.

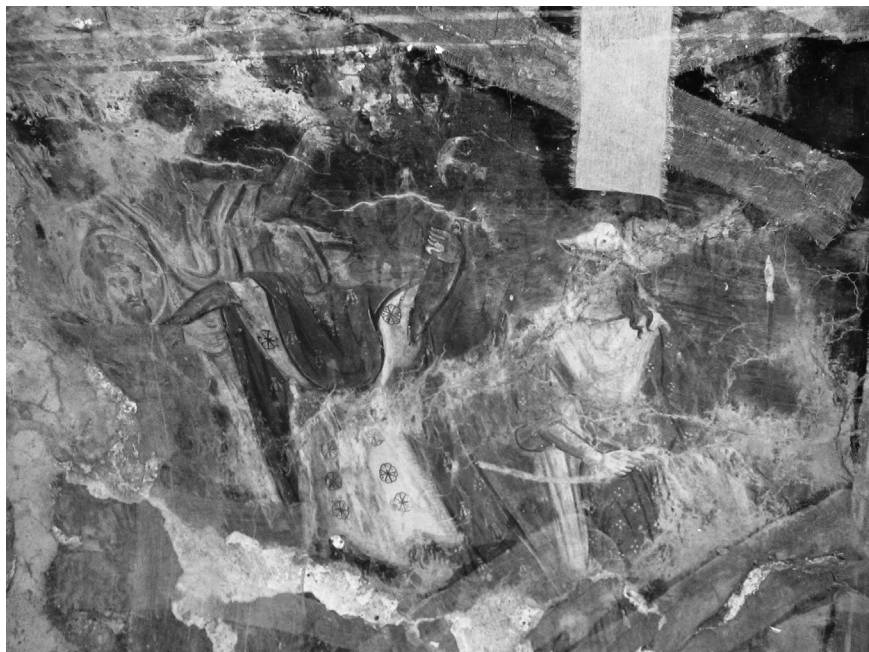


Fig. XII-2 Efpalio Doridos, Church of Ag. Ioannis Theologos, nave, Mockery of Christ (detail)

(photo: author)

XIII Evrytania, Episkopi

Location: In the old village of Episkopi, on the west bank of the river Megdova on the border of Aitolocarnania and Evrytania

Architecture type: Cross-in-square church of the transitional variant with a dome and a narthex

Dating of the church: The katholikon was built at the end of the ninth century

Interior decoration: In the church, there were 240 m² of wall decoration. When it was decided to create an artificial lake in the area, research was carried out in the church during which three layers of frescoes were discovered—namely, from the ninth/tenth, eleventh, and thirteenth centuries, respectively. The church was submerged by the artificial lake in Kremasta, while the frescoes were removed from the walls and transferred to the Byzantine Museum of Athens, where they are still located today. According to a catalogue of the Byzantine Museum, 82 sections of the frescoes of the Episkopi in Evrytania are kept there



Fig. XIII Evrytania, Episkopi

(photo: G. Fousteris)

Dating of the fresco decoration: The first layer to the late ninth or early tenth century; the second to the eleventh century, and the third to the first half of the thirteenth century

References: Orlandos, 1961, 3–20; Chatzidakis, 1967, 62–63, εικ. 4–6; Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες και εικόνες, 1976, 27–37, 57–67, pin. II–XVI and 3–18; Vokotopoulos, 1975, 69; Patterson-Ševčenko, 1983, 34, pl. 8.1; Kalopissi-Verti, 1984b, 223–224; Evans and Wixom, 1997, 51, Fig. 17; Fundić, 2013b, 124–126, 334–338, Figs. 148–153.

XIV Mastron, Episkopi

Location: Acarnania, south from the village of Mastron

Architecture type: Three-aisled timber-roofed basilica

Dating of the church: The end of the seventh or the eighth century. According to written sources, the church was the seat of the bishop of Acheloos during the thirteenth century



Fig. XIV-1 Mastron, Episkopi, general view from SE

(photo: author)



Fig. XIV-2 Mastron, Episkopi, bema apse

(photo: author)

Interior decoration: The church was originally decorated with frescoes in its entirety. Today, the decoration from the thirteenth century is preserved only in the sanctuary: Virgin Marry, two angels and unknown donor in apse and in the lower part of sanctuary eight hierarchies

Inscription: In the southern part of the sanctuary's apse. The inscription is half-damaged

Patron: The inscription mentions the names of Theodore and Konstantinos Doukas, who are also connected to the renewal of the diocese

References: Pétridès, 1909, 72, II; Vokotopoulos, 1967, 328–330, 1969, 241, pin. 240, 241a, 1970, 299–300, pin. 257–259, 1992, 11–19, 179–181; Pal-iouras, 1985, 75, 197–200; Katsaros, 1992, 531–533; Veikou, 2012, 459–460; Fundić, 2013a, 201, 2013b, 339–341, Figs. 156 and 157.

XV Myrtia, Monastery



Fig. XV Myrtia Monastery, general view from SE
(photo: author)

Location: Close to Ano Myrtia village, Aitoloakarnania

Architecture type: Initially, it was a barrel-vaulted, single-nave church. In a second phase, a cross-in-square nave of the distyle variant was added on its western side; in a third structural phase, a timber-roofed narthex was added on the western side of the nave

Inscriptions: Only later inscriptions from 1491 and 1712

Patron: Unknown for the first phase of the church

Dating of the church: Early twelfth century, when the first small church was built. Expanded in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries

Interior decoration: The fresco decoration belongs to four different periods. The sanctuary must have been decorated in the thirteenth century, while the rest in the post-Byzantine era, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Only a few frescoes survive in the oldest small church; today, the sanctuary, which represents the art of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. They consist of the scenes of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and of Stephen the First Martyr. In 1491, it was repainted by Xenos Digenias from Mouchli (the Peloponnese)

References: Orlandos, 1961, 74–112; Vokotopoulos and Tsigaridas, 1968; Vokotopoulos, 1967c, 330, 2012, 130; Paliouras, 1985, 75, 83, 84, 211; Djurić 1979, 218; Fundić, 2013b, 122–124, 342, Fig. 158.

XVI Kremasta, Cave Church of Ag. Nikolaos

Location: Acarnania, the village of Kefalovryso

Architecture type: Cave chapels of which the larger is a single-nave church with a semicircular apse, while the smaller occupied the space of the cave



Fig. XVI Kremasta, cave church of Ag. Nikolaos, fresco of Archangelos
(photo: author)

Dating of the church: It was constructed in the tenth century, with additions from the twelfth (?) and thirteenth centuries

Inscriptions: Two inscriptions. The first inscription is placed below the representation of the Virgin Mary in the niche of the sanctuary: ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΩΣ (ΜΟΝ)ΑΧ(ΟΣ) ΕΝ ΜΗΝΟΙ ΙΟΥΛΙΩ ΙΝΔΙΚΤΙΟΝ(ΟΣ) ΤΡΙΤΗ(Σ) ΙΣ ΤΑ(Σ) Θ΄. The second is to the right of the entrance, next to the archangel Michael: +ΑΡΧΙΣΤ/ ΤΡΑΤΗΓΕ ΒΟ/ΙΘΙ ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥ/(Λ)ΟΝ ΣΟΥ/ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΑΜ(ΗΝ)

Patron: The first founder was the monk Nikandros, who was active in the area from 990 to 1005

Interior decoration: Both representations of the great cave must be dated between 990 and 1005. The frescoes in the nave were executed in the second half of the thirteenth century

References: Vokotopoulos, 1967a, 327–328; Paliouras, 1985, 84, 187–196, Figs. 61–65, 192–204, 2011; Kissas, 1983, 167–196, 1992, 205–237; Fundiό, 2013b, 161–164, 343–346, Figs. 159–166.

XVII Preventza, Panagia (the Panagia Kyriotissa and Ag. Theodoroi)



Fig. XVII Preventza, Panagia (the Panagia Kyriotissa and Ag. Theodoroi), view from the south

(photo: G. Foustieris)

Location: Acarnania, the village of Malateiko Valtou

Architecture: Single-nave, timber-roofed basilica with narthex

Inscriptions: Ceramic inscription on the east side

Patrons: The church was founded by Vassileios Tziskos protostrator possibly of Acheloos, to which Preventza belonged

Dating of the church: End of the thirteenth century

Interior decoration: The church was flooded by the artificial lake of the Kastaki hydroelectric dam. In 1968, the frescoes, approximately 110 square metres in extent, were de-walled and today are kept in boxes in the storage rooms of the Archaeological Ephorate. Before the walls were removed, large sections had already fallen. Frescoes could be dated to the thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries

References: Vokotopoulos and Tsigaridas, 1968, 284–285, 225–227, 1970, 300; Vokotopoulos, 1986, 251–275; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 56–57, Fig. 16; Velenis, 1994; Tsiouris, 1988, 146–147, 199, 323; Paliouras, 1985, 302–305, Figs. 303, 304; Fundić, 2013b, 210–211, 347–351, Figs. 168–174.

XVIII Rivio, Ag Stefanos



Fig. XVIII Rivio, Ag. Stefanos, a view from the SW

(photo: author)

Location: Acarnania, at the height of the village of Rivio, one kilometre east of the Agrinio-Amfilochia highway

Architecture type: Single-nave cross-in-square church

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: No

Dating of the church: Beginning of the thirteenth century

Interior decoration: Few fragments are preserved from the iconographic decoration of the church. The repair and cleaning of the frescoes showed that they can probably be dated to three phases: early phase to the thirteenth century, the second phase to the seventeenth century, and the third to the eighteenth century. The iconographic programme of the first phase includes the frescoes in the spherical triangles. These represent the four evangelists, who are shown seated and writing their gospels. In the lower register parts of decoration consisting of floral motifs is preserved as well

References: Bouras, 1968, 41–56; Konstantios, 1981, 275–283; Paliouras, 1985, 305–308, Figs. 305–308; Fundić, 2013b, 352–353, Figs. 175–177.

XIX Chalkiopoulos, Ag. Andreas the Hermit

Location: Acarnania, four kilometres from the village of Chalkiopoulos

Architecture type: Cave church

Inscriptions: In the apse, under the hand of the Virgin Mary and above the head of St Athanasios, there is an inscription in the form of a scroll with text in seven lines and a date (1282/1283). There is also the second inscription in the frieze/band, which separates the Virgin Mary from the hierarchs. It is a metrical inscription, a poem attributed to Michael Psellos but does not include any historical information

Patrons: According to tradition, the frescoes of the cave are attributed to St Theodora, wife of despot Michael Doukas

Dating of the church: 1282/1283

Interior decoration: Today, a few frescoes belonging to a single layer survive. According to the inscription, which mentions the year 1282/1283, and because of some stylistic elements, the frescoes should be placed in the second half of the thirteenth century

References: Paliouras, 1985, 82, 313–316, Figs. 57, 58, 313–316; Kalopissi-Verti, 1999, 67; Kissas, 1992, 205–235; Papadopoulou, 2002, 14; Rhoby, 2009, 137–139, abb. XXV; Vokotopoulos, 2012, 128, Fig. 13; Fundić, 2013b, 209–210, 354–355, Fig. 178.



Fig. XIX Chalkiopoulos, Ag. Andreas the Hermit, wall painting in altar apse
(photo: Ioannis Chouliaras)

XX Thessaloniki, Acheiropoietos

Location: Thessaloniki, city centre

Architecture type: Three-aisled basilica with a narthex

Dating of the church: Fifth century. The church was modified in the seventh and again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

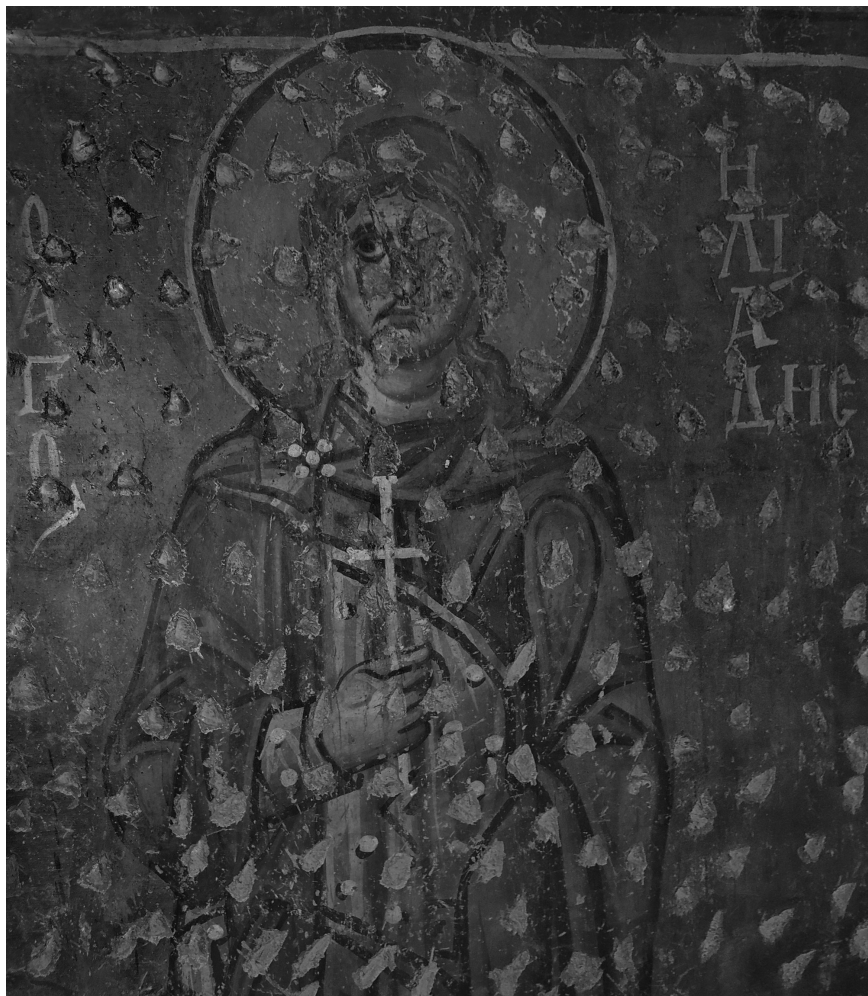


Fig. XX-1 Thessaloniki, Theotokos Acheiropoietos, north wall of the south aisle, figures of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

(photo: G. Fousteris)

Inscriptions: No

Patrons: Unknown

Interior decoration: Fragments of the fifth-century mosaics. Frescoes from the thirteenth century exist in the upper register of the southern aisle. In the southern aisle, above the arches of the colonnade, there were once 18 figures of the Forty Martyrs, nine *en bust* and nine in full length, alternately. Twelve of them survive today in a relatively good condition. Based on the accompanying inscriptions, Sts Theodoulos, Leontios, Athanasios, Cyril, Gorgonios, Dometianos, Gaius, Theophilos, Kandidos, Iliad, Alexander, and Valentinus are identified

References (for frescoes): Xyngopoulos, 1952, 1–6; Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou and Tourta, 1997, 194–195, Figs. 235, 236; Fundić, 2013a, 239–240, 2013b, 356–358, Figs. 179–184; Raptis, 2014.



Fig. XX-2 Thessaloniki, Theotokos Acheiropietos, north wall of the south aisle, St Iliadis (photo: G. Fousteris)



Fig. XX-3 Thessaloniki, Theotokos Acheiropoietos, north wall of the south aisle, detail—candlestick with a lit candle

(photo: G. Fousteris)

XXI Veria. Old Metropolis

Location: Veria

Architecture type: Three-aisled basilica with a narthex

Dating of the church: According to the first inscription, the church should be dated to the mid-Byzantine period—namely, 1070–1080

Inscriptions: Inscription of Bishop Nikitas from around 1070–1080 on the marble lintel of the western entrance to the church

Patrons: Unknown. The decoration of the thirteenth century can be related to Ioannis Amarianos since there is his depiction on the first western pillar of the northern stylobate

Interior decoration: At least four phases from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. The frescoes date from the end of the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Most of the frescoes, however, date to the thirteenth century, in two main phases: the first in 1222–1224/1225 and the second after 1270, which are located in the sanctuary and in the central aisle. Finally, another phase dates back to the fourteenth century.

References: Panayiotidi, 1975, 303–315; Papazotos, 1994, 90, 164–168, 242–249, 258–260, 2003, 65–74; Tsigaridas, 1987, 91–100; Fundić, 2013a, 232–239, 2013b, 362–379, Figs. 192–208; Skiadaresis, 2016.

1. Annunciation: (a) Gabriel; (b) Mary
2. Nativity of Christ
3. Presentation of Christ at the Temple
4. Baptism of Jesus
5. Transfiguration
6. Raising of Lazarus
7. Entry into Jerusalem
8. Judas returning the 30 pieces of silver
9. Last Supper
10. Christ washing the feet of the apostles
11. Procession to Calvary
12. Crucifixion
13. Descent from the Cross
14. Entombment of Christ
15. Lithos
16. Descent of Christ into Hell
17. Journey to Bethlehem
- 18–22. Unidentified scene
23. Dormition
24. Resurrection blessing
- 25–26. Christ appearing to the myrrhbearers
27. Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth
28. Unidentified hierarch
29. Apostle in a medallion
30. Apostle Bartholomew
31. Apostle Andrew
32. Apostle Mark
33. Apostle Luke
34. Apostle Peter
35. Apostle Paul
36. Apostle in a medallion
37. Apostle in a medallion
38. Apostle Thomas
39. Apostle Simon
40. Apostle in a medallion

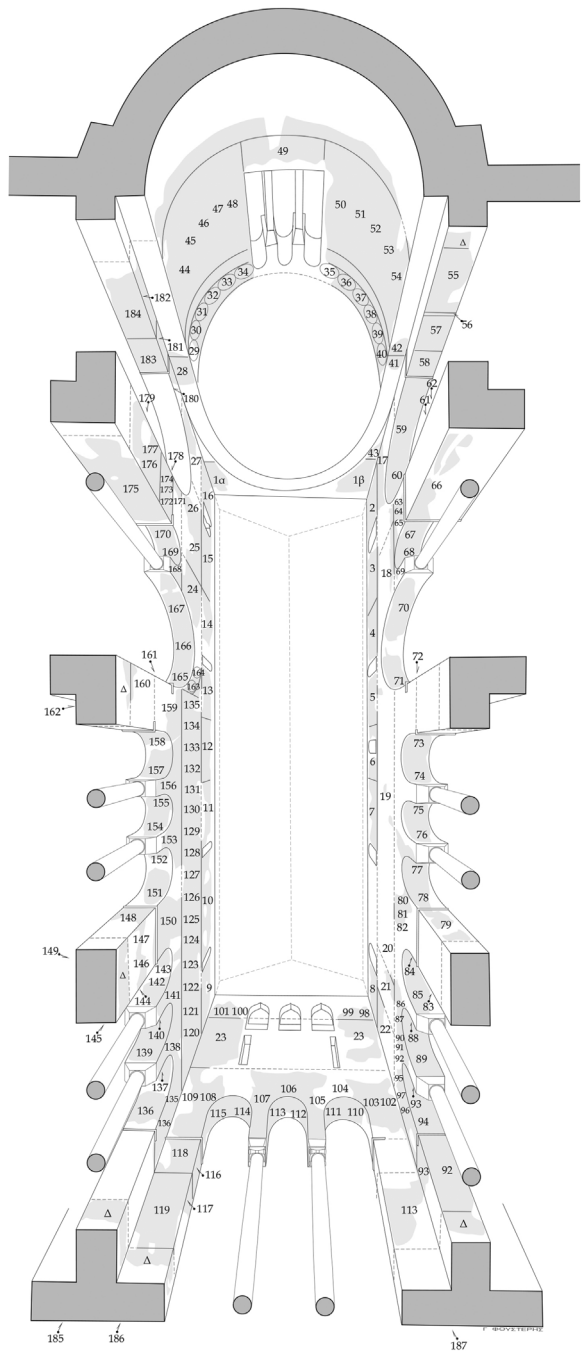


Fig. XXI-1 Veria, Old Metropolis, the iconographic programme of the church (drawing: G. Foustieris)

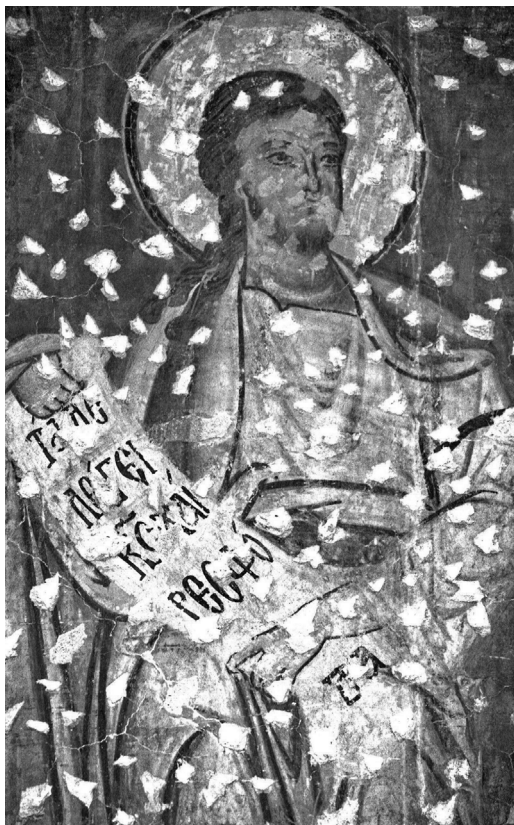


Fig. XXI-2 Veria, Old Metropolis, the prophets Zephaniah and Zechariah
(photo: author)

- 41–42. Unidentified hierarchs
- 43. Joachim
- 44. Eleftherios
- 45. St Gregory Thaumaturgos
- 46. Cyril of Alexandria
- 47. St Gregory the Theologian
- 48. St Basil the Great
- 49. Melismos
- 50. St John Chrysostom
- 51. St Athanasios the Great
- 52. John the Almsgiver
- 53. St Nicholas
- 54. St Gregory of Nyssa
- 55. Apostle Luke

56. Inscription
57. St Proterios of Alexandria
58. St Mnason
- 59–60. Unidentified saint
61. Germanos of Constantinople
62. St Polyuktos of Constantinople
- 63–65. Unidentified hierarchs
66. Virgin Mary
- 67–69. Unidentified saint
70. Apostle John
71. Apostle Mark
72. Blessing of peace
- 73–78. Unidentified martyr saints
79. Unidentified warrior saint
80. St Gaurios
81. St Avivos
82. Unidentified saint, deacon
83. Unidentified scene (Virgin Mary?)
- 84–85. Unidentified martyr saints
86. St Kyrikas
87. St Ioulita
- 88–89. Unidentified martyr saints
90. St Elipodoforos
- 91–92. Unidentified martyr saints
93. Unidentified warrior saint
94. St Arethas
95. Unidentified martyr saints
96. St Eustathios Plakidas
97. Unidentified martyr saint (*en buste*)
- 98–101. The lower part of Old Testament figures
102. Paul of Thebes
103. Unidentified hosios
104. Unidentified saint (*en buste*)
105. St Onoufrios
106. Unidentified hosios
107. St. Arsenisos
- 108–109. Unidentified hosioi
- 110–115. Hymnographs
116. Angel
117. St Barbara
118. Unidentified hosios
119. St Kyriaki
120. St Spyridon
121. Unidentified kephalophoros
122. Unidentified hierarch

- 123–125. Unidentified kephalophoroi
 - 126. Unidentified hierarch
 - 127. Unidentified kephalophoros
 - 128. Prophet Zechariah
 - 129. Prophet Daniel
 - 130. Prophet Ezekiel
 - 131. Prophet Jeremiah
 - 132. Prophet Habakkuk
 - 133. Prophet Isaiah
 - 134. Prophet Aaron
 - 135. Prophet Moses
- 136–139. Unidentified hosioi
 - 139. St Panteleimon
 - 140. Unidentified Anargyros
 - 141. Makarios the Roman (?)
- 142–143. Unidentified saints
 - 144. St Cyprian
 - 145. Eleftherios with Amariano
- 146–147. Unknown
 - 148. Theophanes the Verian
 - 149. Unidentified equestrian
 - 150. Nathan and David
- 151–152. Unidentified hosioi
 - 153. St John Stylite
- 154–155. Unidentified hosioi
 - 156. St David of Thessaloniki
- 157–158. Unidentified hosioi
 - 159. Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene
 - 160. Unknown saint
 - 161. St Jerusalem, apostles Peter and Paul
 - 162. St Marina
 - 163. St Lauros (*en buste*)
 - 164. St Floros (*en buste*)
 - 165. Apostle Mathew
 - 166. Jesus Christ (*en buste*)
 - 167. Apostle Luke
 - 168. Cornelius the Centurion
- 169–170. Unknown
 - 171. Unidentified hierarch
 - 172. St Simeon of Jerusalem
 - 173. Koroutos of Iconium
 - 174. St Cyprian
 - 175. Jesus Christ (Chalkites)
- 176–177. Unidentified hierarchs
 - 178. St Dorotheos of Tyros

- 179–180. Unidentified hierarchs
 - 181. St Amphilocius
- 182–184. Unidentified hierarchs
 - 185. Jesus calming the storm
 - 186. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law
 - 187. Christ appears at Lake Tiberias
 - 188. Unidentified saint
 - 189. Nativity of John the Baptist
 - 190. Annunciation to Zechariah
 - 191. Murder of the prophet Zechariah
- 192–194. Unidentified scenes
 - 195. Testimony of John the Baptist
 - 196. Conversation between John the Baptist and two disciples about Christ
 - 197. Temptation of Jesus
 - 198. Angel guides John in the desert
 - 199. St John the Baptist
 - 200. Prophet Elisha
 - 201. Prophet Isaiah
 - 202. Baptism of Jesus
 - 203. Temptation of Jesus
 - 204. St Vitale of Rome
 - 205. St Hippolytus of Rome
 - 206. St Agathon of Rome
 - 207. St Adrian of Rome
 - 208. St Euplos
 - 209. St Stephen
 - 210. St Juvenal
 - 211. Unidentified hierarch

XXII Kypseli, Ag. Demetrios Monastery

Location: Kypseli in Thesprotia (former Tourkopalouko)

Architecture type: Three-aisled cross-vaulted church

Dating of the church: The end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth centuries

Patron: According to the inscription, Michael Zorianos, protostrator of the ruler Thomas Komnenos Doukas

Interior decoration: Three phases of the frescoes: first, late thirteenth early fourteenth century; second, eighteenth and third, nineteenth centuries. It is possible that under the newer plasters that cover most of the nave walls, significant parts of the Byzantine painted decoration are preserved. To date, several figures have been uncovered in the transverse barrel vault

References: Vokotopoulos and Papadopoulou, 2007; Dimitrakopoulos, 2008; Vokotopoulos, 2012, 257–264.



Fig. XXI Kypseli, Ag. Demetrios monastery, general view from E
(photo: author)

XXIII Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches



Fig. XXIII-1 Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches, general view from NE
(photo: author)

Location: On the outskirts of the settlement of Kostaniani, Ioannina, near Dodoni

Architecture type: Three-aisled, cross-vaulted church

Dating of the church: Scholars' estimates range between 1240 and 1300

Inscriptions: On the northern wall above the door but not intact

Patron: Unknown

Interior decoration: The entire church is covered with frescoes. Two phases

Dating of the frescoes: Towards the end of the thirteenth century. There are also frescoes from the post-Byzantine period. Fragments of the frescoes from the outside walls, dated to the eighteenth century, have been preserved

References: Evangelidis, 1931, 258–269; Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 52–53, Figs. 8–10; Fousteris, 2005, 42–52, draw. 3 and 4; Vokotopoulos, 2007c, 51, pin. 37b, 38; Babuin, 2013; Fundić, 2013b, 197–205, 373–382, Figs. 213–231.

1. Annunciation
2. Nativity of Christ
3. Wisdom of Joseph
4. Flight into Egypt
5. Presentation of Christ at the Temple
6. Transfiguration of Christ
7. Miracle at Chonae
8. Raising of Lazarus
9. Entry into Jerusalem
10. Betrayal of Christ
11. Unidentified scene
12. Crucifixion
13. Procession to Calvary
14. Descent from the Cross
15. Lamentation of Christ
16. Holy Women at the Tomb (Lithos)
17. Opening the Tomb
18. Descent of Christ into Hell
19. Doubting of Thomas
20. Mid-Pentecost
21. Ascension of Christ
22. Hetoimasia
23. Pray of Joachim
24. Pray of Anne
25. Nativity of the Virgin Mary
26. Prophet Elijah in a medallion
27. Prophet Daniel in a medallion
28. Prophet Elisha in a medallion
29. Prophet Ezekiel in a medallion
30. Prophet Iakov in a medalion

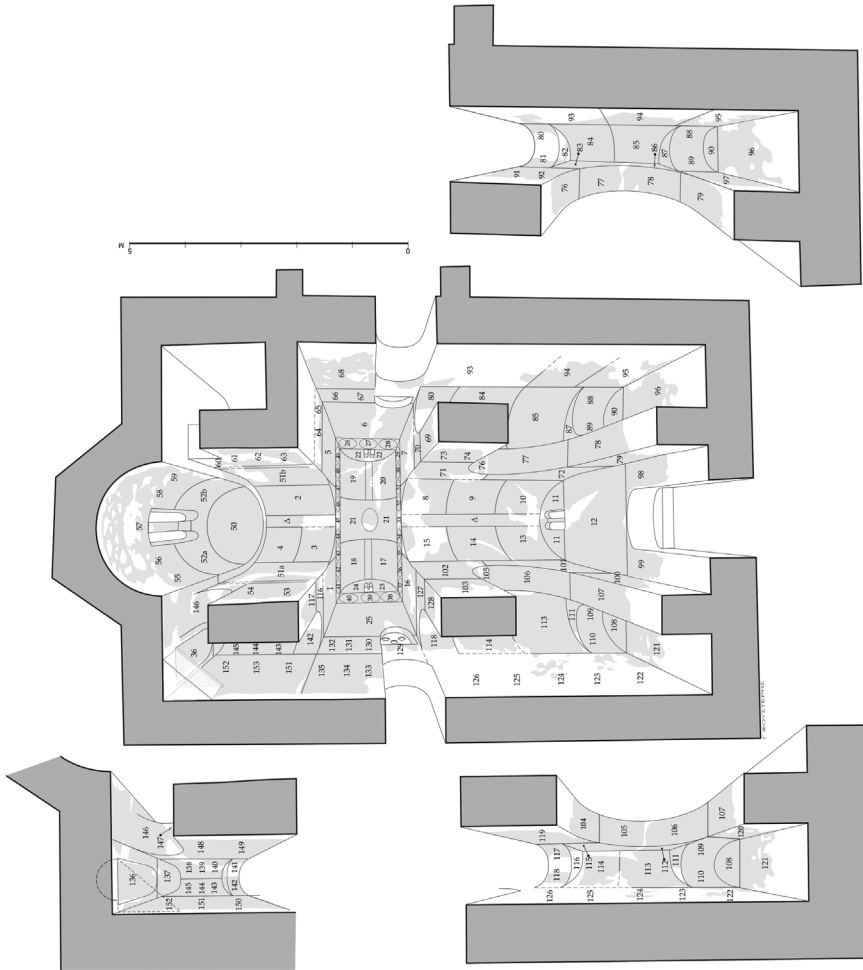


Fig. XXIII-2 Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches, the iconographic programme of the church

(drawing: G. Foustieris)

31. Unidentified prophet in a medallion
32. Prophet Zechariah in a medallion
33. Agion Keramion
34. Prophet Amos in a medallion
35. Prophet Sofonias in a medallion
36. Prophet Habakkuk in a medallion
37. Prophet Jonah in a medallion
38. Prophet Jeremiah in a medallion

39. Prophet Zechariah father of John the Baptist
40. Prophet Joel in a medallion
41. Unidentified prophets in a medallion
42. Prophet Isaiah in a medallion
43. Unidentified prophets in a medallion
44. Prophet Solomon in a medallion
45. Mandilion
46. Prophet David in a medallion
47. Prophet Moses in a medallion
48. Prophet Aaron in a medallion
49. Joshua the son of nun in a medallion
50. The Virgin Mary (Panagia Platytera)
51. Angels—deacons
52. Communion of the apostles
53. Unidentified hierarchy
54. Unidentified hierarchy
55. St Gregory the Theologian (full length)
56. St Basil the Great (full length)
57. Melismos
58. St John Chrysostom
59. St Athanasios the Great
60. Unidentified hierarchy
61. St Polykarpos
62. Unidentified hierarchy
63. St Vlassios (?)
64. Jesus Christ
65. St Orestis
66. St Auxentios
67. St Eugenios
68. The Virgin Mary (*Bebaia Elpis*)
69. Apostle Peter
70. St Marcian
71. John the Evangelist
72. Luke the Evangelist
73. St Constantine
74. St Helena
75. St Eustathios Plakidas
76. St John of Damascus
77. St Kosmas the Melodist
78. St Savvas
79. St Anthony
80. Unidentified saint
81. Unidentified saint
82. St Nazarios
83. Prophet Manasseh

84. Mocking of Christ
85. Ascent to the Cross
86. Prophet Isaiah
87. St Gervasios
88. St Celsus (*en buste*)
89. St Protasios
90. Jesus Christ Emmanuel
91. St Damian
92. St Kosmas
93. Dormition
94. St Christopher
95. St Arsenios
96. St Euthymios
97. St Theodosius the Cenobiarch
98. St Daniel the Stylite
99. St Symeon Stylite
100. St Paraskevi
101. Mark the Evangelist
102. Matthew the Evangelist
103. St Nicholas *en buste* in supernatural size
104. St Prokopios
105. St Theodore the Studite
106. St Joseph the Hymnographer
107. St Marina



Fig. XXIII-3 Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches, Nativity of Christ

(photo: Ioannis Chouliaras)

- 108. Jesus Christ, Ancient of Days
- 109. St Samonas
- 110. St Avivos
- 111. St Fotios
- 112. St Anikitos
- 113. The Reception of the Angels by Abraham
- 114. The Hospitality of Abraham
- 115. St Lavros
- 116. Unidentified saint (Floros?)
- 117. St Julitta
- 118. St Kyrikas
- 119. St Artemios



Fig. XXIII-4 Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches, St Symeon Stylite
(photo: Ioannis Chouliaras)

120. St Barbara
121. St Kyriaki
122. Unidentified warrior saint
123. Unidentified warrior saint
124. St Demetrios
125. Unidentified warrior saint
126. Unidentified warrior saints
127. St Akindynos
128. Apostle Paul
129. Donor inscription
130. St Pegasios
131. St Afthonios
132. St Elpidoforos
133. Virgin Mary (Great Deisis)
134. Jesus Christ (Great Deisis)
135. St John the Baptist (Great Deisis)
136. St Romanos
137. St Achileios
138. St Oikoumenios of Trikki
139. Paul the Confessor
140. St Nikandros
141. Unidentified hierarchs
142. Unidentified hierarchs



Fig. Kostaniani, the Church of Taxiarches, Virgin with Angels

(photo: Ioannis Chouliaras)

- 143. Unidentified hierarchs
- 144. Clement of Ancyra
- 145. St Amphilochios
- 146. St Stephen
- 147. St Euplos
- 148. St Spyridon
- 149. Epiphany of Cyprus
- 150. St Peter of Alexandria
- 151. St Antypas
- 152. St Therapon (?)

XXIV Plakoti, Metamorphosi Sotiros



Fig. XXIV-1 Plakoti, Metamorphosi Sotiros, general view from SW

(photo: author)

Location: Southeast of the village of Plakoti, Thesprotia

Architecture type: Free-cross plan with a dome

Dating of the church: Third decades of the thirteenth century

Interior decoration: Several fragments of the wall decoration have been uncovered under the lime coatings in some parts of the temple. They are dated to the first half of the thirteenth century

References: Vokotopoulos, 1997, 229–230, 2007c, 51, 2012, 128, Fig. 12; Fundić, 2013b, 127–128, 383–385; Chouliaras, 2019.

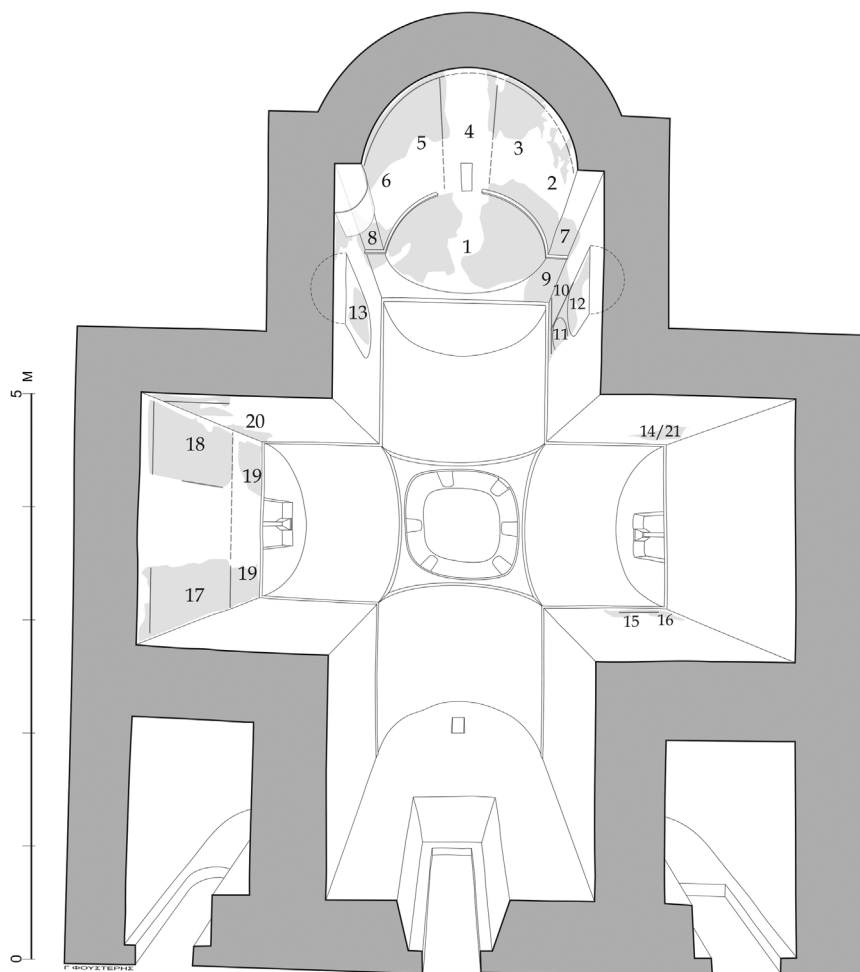


Fig. XXIV-2 Plakoti, Metamorphosi Sotiros, the iconographic programme of the church
(drawing: G. Fousteris)

1. The Virgin Mary
2. Gregory the Theologian
3. St John Chrysostom
- 4–6. Unidentified hierarchs
7. St Euplos
8. St Stephen the First Martyr
9. Annunciation
10. St Leo of Catania

11. Jesus Christ Emmanuel
12. Unidentified hierarch
13. Prophet Zechariah
14. Transfiguration
15. Jesus Christ (Great Desis)
16. Dormition
17. St Prokopios
18. St Panteleimon

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